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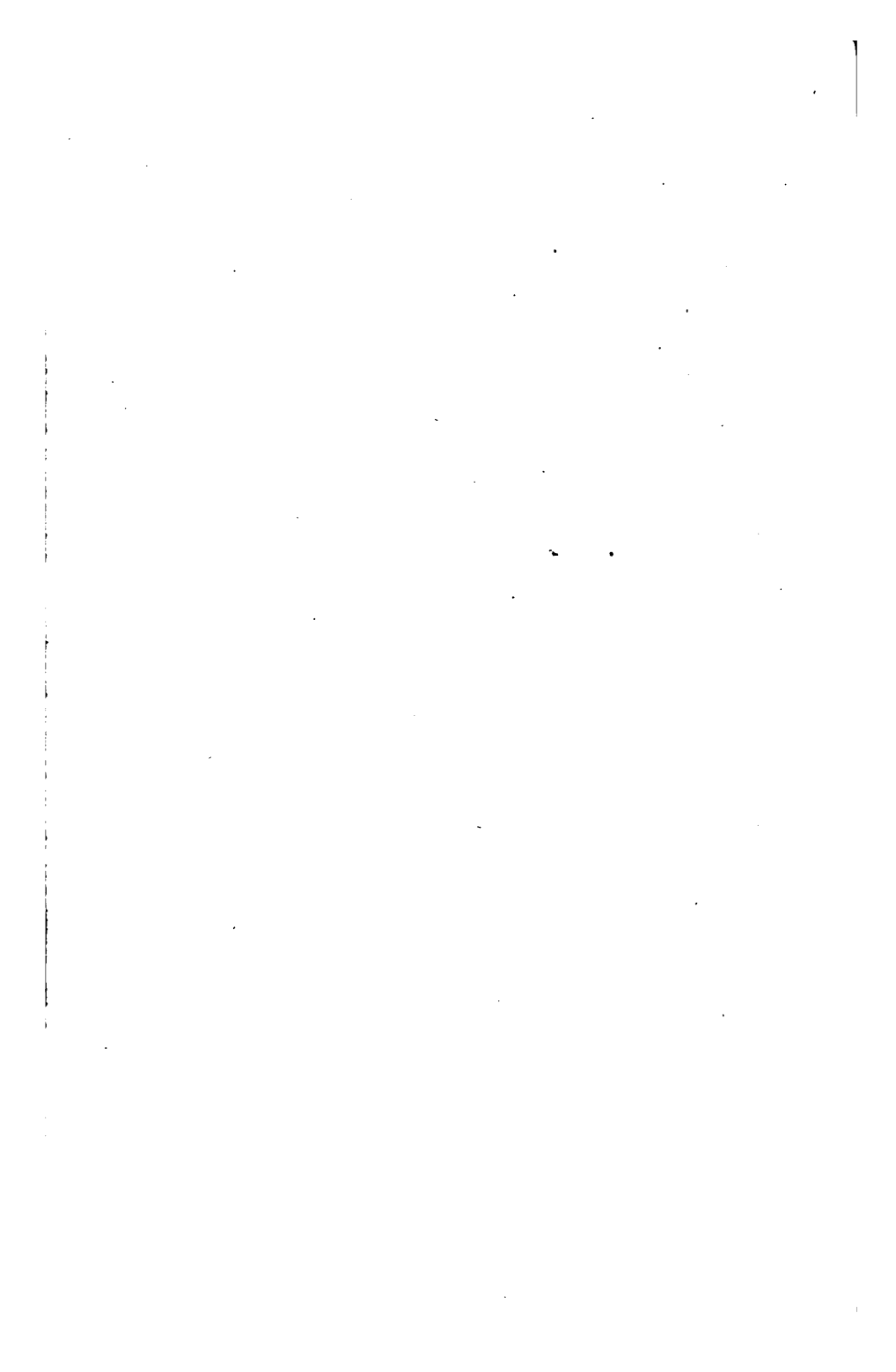


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DOUBLES AND QUITTS





"And he shall have a nosegay too"

DOUBLES AND QUARTS

THEORY AND PRACTICE

OF THE GAME OF

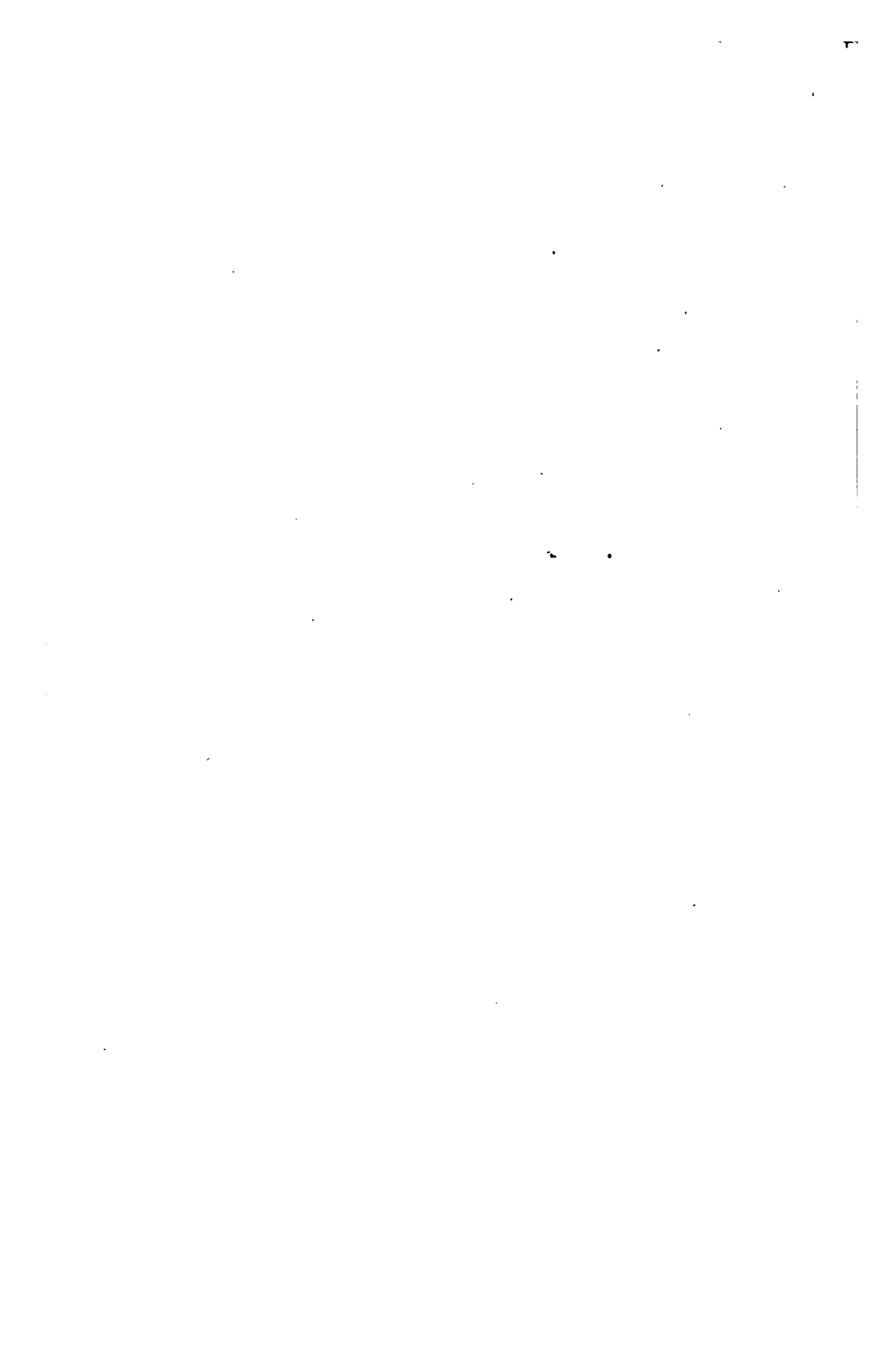
THE DOUBLES

AND QUARTS

BY J. H. W. L. AND S. J. W.

EDINBURGH AND LONDON

1845



DOUBLES AND QUITs

BY

LAURENCE W. M. LOCKHART

LATE CAPTAIN 92D HIGHLANDERS

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

SYLVESTRIS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.



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DOUBLES AND QUILTS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

"I see by you I am a sweet-faced youth."

—*Comedy of Errors.*

Is it not an accepted article of the popular creed, that no two objects in nature exactly resemble one another?

I am not going to investigate the origin of that belief; I am not going to inquire what laborious wielder of the 'Novum Organum' undertook to establish it; I only ask if we do not regard it as an irrefragable axiom, that Nature, in all her efforts of

creative power, from the highest to the lowest, does not repeat herself?

I started in life with this impression. I rejoiced in it. I detest monotony, and here was a high enough sanction for the indulgence of my dislike. I now beg to inform the nobility, gentry, and public in general, that this axiom is a humbug. I denounce it as a fallacy—as a dream dreamed in a fool's paradise (from which I have been wakened)—as a swindle, a snare, and a delusion, in at least one most important instance. It will be conceded, I presume, that any given man is, to himself at all events, a most important natural object; and therefore, without offending against the laws of modesty, I may say that I myself am the eminent instance in which Nature appears to have deviated from her rule.

If she were to be arraigned on a charge of inconsistency, she might plead that her

scheme would fall to the ground if she became monotonous or uniform in any respect.

Let it be granted, for the sake of avoiding argument; but then, why select *me* as the exception? I yield to none in my devotion to her and all her works. She has no fonder or more dutiful son; was it well, was it fitting, then, to make a step-child of me? to exempt me from the privileges common to all her other offspring, and even largely to curtail the value of my personal identity by giving me a "double"?

Some one is sure to say, "What is a 'double'?" Some people have a nagging and unappeasable thirst for definitions; so, to prevent delay *in limine*, let me at once define him as "a second edition, exact copy, or co-existing counterpart of another man."

The above-mentioned dogma has hitherto regarded his existence as fabulous—as the

myth of the bard or the playful fancy of the dramatist — like the Menæchmi of Plautus, the Dromios and the Antipholi of Shakespeare, the Dioscuri of the ancient classics, *passim*, and the Corsican Brothers of our own Dion Boucicault. But my double individually is an entity in very truth—a solid, prosaic captain of the Heaviest Dragoons, standing six feet and one inch in his stockings, decidedly “inclined to *embonpoint*,” with a florid complexion and Judas-coloured hair, boisterous red whiskers, pale eyes, a gigantic imperial, pump-handle nose, a mouth like to a Gothic gargoyle, and a facial angle instantly suggestive of “the companion and the friend of man.”

That is what my double is. Confound him!

Malevolent reader, you are not likely to lose this chance of making “a very palpable hit.” I can hear you say (Oh! “*petulanti splene cachinno*”) — I can hear you say,

"Here, then, you have also presented us with your own portrait!"

And I suppose I must sorrowfully admit it. I used to read myself differently, as on this wise,—

"A Captain" — not, O ye gods! a "Heavy"—"a Captain of Fusiliers, standing six feet and one inch in my stockings; of a grand, full, military figure; warm, manly complexion; auburn hair; luxuriant ditto whiskers; cold, grey, intellectual eyes; nose large, indeed, but commanding; mouth wide, but gracious; and a forehead expressing a character full of bland and Christian attributes."

An inner emotion of my soul tells me that the latter is my true description, but the concurrent evidence of many men leads me to believe that, to the grosser vision of the rest of my species, I appear in the former likeness. Perhaps the truth lies somewhere between the two portraits; it

is possible that personal enmity may have imparted to the former some dash of caricature, and that a well-grounded self-esteem may have limned the latter more favourably than is quite consistent with facts; it is possible, I say, but let it pass.

Robert Burns breathed an infamous aspiration, on behalf of all mankind, that the Powers above might endow them with the faculty of seeing themselves as others see them.

*"Evertere domos totas, optantibus ipsis,
Di faciles."*

True, but I never commissioned Burns or any one else to prefer such an absurd request. I would that he had left it alone, or spoken for himself.

The gods, however, with a facility which I cannot but deplore, have heard his prayer in my case, so a pleasant dream is dissolved, and I awake a humbled, miserable man.

But keen though the pain of such a dis-

enchantment may be, the possession of a double supplies me with a heavier grievance still.

What I do complain of, and declare to be too intolerably burdensome for human patience, are the perpetual mistakes as to the identity of this man and myself which are made by my most intimate friends and relatives—mistakes that have already landed me in most compromising situations, and involved me in not a few social and domestic imbroglios.

How would you—how would any one of a respectable walk and conversation, with a stake in the country and a character to lose, like things of this sort?

One day last season, in a London drawing-room where a party was assembled before dinner, seeing a man enter whom I knew very well, and was in the habit of meeting everywhere, I tried to shake hands with him; whereupon he (he was an ass, of

course) placed his hands ostentatiously behind his back, and elevating his voice so as to attract every one's attention, bawled out,—

“No, sir! certainly not; you shan't know me one day and cut me the next; my name is Baxter” (a slightly irrelevant statement), “and no man shall patronise me.”

“My dear Baxter——” I began.

“Don't ‘dear Baxter’ me, sir;” and seeing the idiot was going to make a scene of it before the ladies, I suggested the possibility of a mistake, and the propriety of deferring explanations. During dinner the flaming eyes of Baxter scorched me with looks of scorn and indignation; and afterwards, when explanations came off, I found I was accused of having brutally cut him in the Park that day, and of having sworn with ferocious expletives that I had never seen him before. Here I proved an *alibi*, and told the sad tale of my double; but a man can't spend the whole of his London

season proving *alibis* and telling long yarns about his double. Can he?

There is also a slight inconvenience in such a scene as the following—it ruffles the temper and acts injuriously on the digestive organs:—One day last week I was sauntering up Pall Mall with a couple of friends, quiet and refined men like myself, when we were startled by a loud human bellow from behind, and immediately after I sustained a shock between the shoulders which nearly upset me. Turning round, I found a bearded and perfectly colonial-looking person standing with outstretched paw, and a face full of affectionate recognition, and glowing with tropical if not alcoholic tints. My face was vacant.

“What, Dolly!” the monster roared, clutching my hand. “My own old Dolly-Wallah! It does my heart good to see you—how are all the other jolly old Patagonians?” and with his other paw he began

to hammer me about the region of the liver, which with me is a tender organ. "Oh! d-d-d-don't," I cried, doubled up with pain.

"Yes, I will, plumed warrior of Attock! Yes, I will, wild bird of the Moffussil," and he did, heartily.

"D—n it, sir, you must be mad," I gasped.

"As a dancing dervish, mad with joy at seeing old Dolly again. Do you remember the Grampus?" and he went on hammering me.

"No, sir, I don't remember Grampus, or Dolly, or Wolly, or Patagonia, or any of your cursed low friends. It's not my line. You're evidently from India—I never was there. You've got sunstroke, I suppose, or something; but, by Jove, if you don't let my liver alone, I'll call the police!"

There was quite a little crowd by this time, and my quiet and refined friends might

be observed in the distance walking rapidly off on the other side of the street.

“Oh! I see,” said my assailant, suddenly assuming an air of dignified hauteur, “we’re too fine to recognise an indigo-planter in Pall Mall, although we knew the way to his bungalow pretty well in Rohilcund, and didn’t mind punishing his brandy-pawnee and cheroots, or borrowing his horses, or calling him ‘Jack;’ that was in the North-West Provinces, but here it’s another thing—here we must be discreet; we’re in London now, and swells, and we must forget. Oh yes! we must forget.”

“Upon my life, sir, this is too intolerable” (he was gesticulating and talking at the pitch of his voice). “It’s quite evident *you* forget yourself. If you’re mad, why the deuce don’t you go to Hanwell? If you’re drunk, why don’t you go and sleep it off? You’ve hurt my back and my liver, and you’re making a scene in the street

with a total stranger; but, if you don't leave off, I'll give you in charge. I swear I will!"

"Total stranger! I like that. I suppose you'll tell me next that you're not Captain Burridge, of the —— Dragoon Guards, you puppy!"

"Yes, I will, you ruffian!" for I was nettled by this time. "I'm not Captain Burridge, and I'm glad of it, if you're a specimen of his friends. But there, see for yourself—there's my card! For heaven's sake don't follow me!" and I dashed into the Army and Navy Club, and told the porter to give him in charge if he came bothering. From an upper window of the Club I saw the man of indigo leaning for some minutes against the railings of the War Office, and regarding my card with a look of stupefaction.

These two cases may be sufficient to establish the fact that a remarkably strong like-

ness does exist between this man and me ; but I will add one other, for the truth of which I solemnly vouch—one which will show the reader that the word double is strictly appropriate, and enable him to grasp some conception of the abominable inconveniences a man so afflicted is likely, nay, certain, to undergo. The first intimation I had of the existence of my “double” was conveyed to me the year before last, in a letter from a brother of mine who was then serving with his regiment in India. My own regiment had been for some time under orders to proceed to the same favoured clime ; and my brother, on his return from a six months’ expedition in Thibet, during which he had been cut off from all news, expected to find we had arrived. On his way down country the first civilised place he reached was one of the sanatoriums—Nynnee Tal, or Simla, or Mussoorie, I forget which ; but whichever it was, its leading

hotel possessed a *table d'hôte* to which my brother went for dinner on the day of his arrival.

He had not been long seated when an individual entered the room and took a chair opposite him. This individual (who was no other than the accursed Burrige) my brother at once conceived to be me, whom he had not seen for five years—he had no doubt whatsoever on the subject—but as Burrige merely gave him a glance of perfect non-recognition, he said nothing.

The fact is, my brother and I were both *farceurs* in a small way, and he immediately imagined that I was feigning ignorance of him by way of a joke; and delighted with the idea of foregoing all other human emotion in the cause of mirth, he fell heartily into the humour of the thing; and though fraternal yearnings turned his gaze now and then in the direction of Burrige, he contrived to make his expression as indifferent

and unconscious as possible. At the same time he could not sufficiently admire my supposed *nonchalance*; for BurrIDGE, being hungry and a plunger, after satisfying his curiosity with one bovine glance round the table, thereafter devoted himself exclusively to his victuals.

Dinner being ended, the company dropped one by one from the room, till at last my brother was left alone with BurrIDGE, who continued to work conscientiously through the dessert. When the door closed on the last person, my brother clapped his hands and loudly shouted, "Bravo! bravo! bravissimo!" BurrIDGE on this put up his eyeglass and stared at him for a second or two with a perfectly stolid countenance, then, dropping his glass, proceeded to attack a fresh mango.

"Bravissimo! bravissimo!" shouted my brother, doubly pleased; "capital! capital! couldn't be better!"

Again Burridge inserted his glass, and slowly remarked, "If it's the dinner you're so pleased with, I can't say much for your taste ; in my opinion it's the foulest thing I ever ate in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America."

Again my brother was in ecstasies, but, checking his mirth, he remarked, "Well, but come—enough's as good as a feast ; you've carried that game quite far enough ; don't you think you had better stop it now ?"

Again the eyeglass was inserted, and the plunger spoke,—

"Oh ! the proprietor, I suppose ; well, it would take a good deal of this kind of *enough* to make a feast. But look here, if I pay you your contract price, I've a right to eat as much as ever I please ; and I'll tell you what it is, I'll just serve you out. I'll eat your whole dessert, if I have cholera for it ; and I'll ring for more if I'm alive when this is done."

"Come, come," said my brother, "no more humbug. How's the governor?"

"What governor?" said Burridge, in great astonishment.

"My governor, of course."

"Don't believe you ever had one," was the scornful reply; and he ate on.

"Tut, tut, man! how's the old lady?"

"I sincerely hope she's dead," said Burridge, sucking away imperturbably.

"Oh, Donald, you parricidal ruffian! where are your natural affections?" and he playfully threw an over-ripe mango at the dragoon, which took effect upon his chin and burst over his white waistcoat. Thereupon a terrible scene ensued; the phlegm of the plunger gave way to ungovernable fury, and he overwhelmed my brother with handfuls of fruit, plates, glasses, knives, and whatever came to hand. The row alarmed the whole establishment, and Burridge was with difficulty overpowered. Eventually an

explanation took place, and my brother was, though with some difficulty, convinced. They immediately became great friends (I fear my brother's tastes are rather low), and he afterwards saved Burridge from falling over a "cud." I don't know whether that is the right spelling, and I'm not quite sure that I know what a "cud" is, but I believe it to be a kind of precipice in the Himalayas over which picnic parties appear to have an unfortunate habit of losing their lives. Be that as it may, my brother somehow saved his life in connection with a "cud," and I, for my part, can't say I think the better of him for it.

I have now mentioned three of these cases of mistaken identity, and I think they are sufficient, though, if necessary, instead of three I could adduce three hundred; and every day at this present writing brings large additions to the list.

Burridge has a large acquaintance ap-

parently, and on an average day in the height of the season I should say I cut about a dozen of them who insist on bowing to me. I too have a large acquaintance, so it may be presumed that Burridge's average daily bag approaches the same dimensions as my own. Our respective lists, therefore, must be rapidly diminishing, owing to the impracticability of establishing an *alibi* to every one who is cut by one's double. I find that Burridge (who is excessively indignant at the mistakes, on the ground, I understand, that his personal beauty and *ton* are superior to mine—ha! ha!), in cutting my acquaintances, contrives, by the way he does so, to leave behind very rancorous feelings—so much so that many are too angry to entertain the idea of an *alibi* or any other basis of explanation; so I now make a point of cutting his people as offensively as possible, mowing them down with a trenchant sneer, or blighting them with the incredu-

lous astonishment of a wintry eye. It is war to the knife between us now—a war of reprisals, and, I suspect, of extermination, as far as our visiting lists are concerned. At the beginning of the season, when Burridge returned from Patagonia or the Mofussil, or whencesoever he did return, and when, consequently, the distressing inconvenience I have, I fear, been too long dwelling upon, began first to be felt, I sent an envoy to him to see if we could not come to some arrangement to obviate the inconvenience of these mistakes. My representative (who was filled with zeal rather than with discretion, and who was, moreover, of a bullying and autocratic turn of mind) pointed out to Burridge that, as he was the latest comer, in a Park-going point of view, I was clearly entitled to consider myself the aggrieved party, and to call upon him to make any sacrifice that might be necessary to restore our respective identities to a proper

footing. He then suggested that BurrIDGE should shave his whiskers off, which was declined : that he should adopt blue spectacles ; no, he wouldn't. Well, then, a blue eyeglass ; certainly not. That he should wear perpetual mourning, or a white hat with a black band, or become notorious by walking about with an alpenstock, or carrying a kitten or a squirrel on his shoulder wherever he went. No, he would agree to nothing of the sort. " Well then," said my envoy, " there's only one thing for it—we can't have you in town at all during the season ; you must go and cricket or fish somewhere—say Cornwall or Norway—during May, June, and July. I daresay we can spare you the last week in July, provided you avoid the Park and the Opera." BurrIDGE, who is evidently unreasonable, hereupon drove my envoy from his presence with language unfit for publication ; and from that day BurrIDGE eyes me and I eye BurrIDGE as Saul eyed David.

CHAPTER II.

“Gaudeo edepol, si quid propter me tibi evenit boni.
Nam illa cum te ad se vocabat me esse credidit.”

—PLAUTUS, *Menæch.*

THE preceding pages were written a good many years ago, and the events therein related are separated by an interval of five years from those which belong to the narrative I now propose to lay before the public. They were written, it will be seen, at a time when I was smarting under the annoyance of feeling that my identity was almost shared by another man. Why I wrote them has now escaped my recollection. It may have been that they were intended as the introduction to a series of papers, wherein were to be duly chronicled

the various *contretemps* and untoward events which seemed likely to arise from the startling resemblance between Burridge and myself; perhaps with the wild hope of a vain youth who wished the eyes of all London to be upon him, of advertising the public thoroughly of the existence of the double identity, and thereby of that half of the identity which belonged to himself; thus salving his *amour propre* wounded by the previous mistakes, by making himself notable in this somewhat ignoble way. It may be so; we know how sweet the “*monstrari digito*” is to many minds, and what devices are resorted to to procure the feeblest little tootle upon the smallest of Fame’s penny trumpets; but it is now immaterial why they were written. Suffice it that here they are, ready to my hand, and that I am going to prefix them as an explanatory introduction to the narrative of the remarkable chain of circumstances to which, after being

lost sight of and forgotten for a good many years, this singular resemblance has more recently given rise, influencing in a manner as singular as the likeness itself the destinies of my double and myself. Little did I think when I used to pass Captain BurrIDGE in the Park, or encounter him in the "Zoologicals," with a fixed eye and erected crest—little did I think that one day I should be —, but pshaw ! I must not anticipate.

I accompanied my rich aunt (widow of a rich City maternal uncle,—for though a Scotchman I will be moderate enough to own that I have *some* City blood) one evening, two or three seasons ago, to the opera, and having established her and myself in the stalls which she had selected at Mitchell's, after half an hour's deliberation and discussion with that long-suffering man, I proceeded to take the usual survey of the house, in quest of friends or notables worthy

of observation. My aunt, I must explain, was in the habit of visiting the opera once annually, but these annual occasions were for her grand festas and gala nights, and she entered upon each with the avowed intention of "getting her pennyworth." In this expression was implied not so much a full swing of musical enjoyment; to this, I fear, she was indifferent, except when her ear recognised some air with which the interpreting organ-grinder had familiarised her in making hideous the Bromptonian day and night. "Getting her pennyworth" implied the largest possible gratification of her social rather than of her musical tastes; it implied the earliest possible arrival and the latest possible departure; it implied the selection of a night when there was likely to be a full and brilliant house, with its fine toilettes and diamonds, grandees, lions, heroes and heroines of burning scandals, ministers, foreign princes, and other pomps and vanities

which need not be recounted. But another essential element in her pennyworth was a good-natured cicerone, who either knew or pretended to know about everybody and everything in the house, and who, proof against the indignant "Hush! hush!" of the audience, didn't mind administering, in the midst of the most thrilling passages, honeyed potions of fashionable intelligence to the worthy old soul. If she had a predominating weakness (and who has not?) it was for the upper ten thousand. It was rapture to her to gaze upon them, their finery and their equipages; their titles of distinction were music in her ears; and stray anecdotes of what went on in their charmed circle were to her sacred and awful as revelations from an unapproachable paradise. Foolish of the old creature; but was she not a matron of the British middle class? Can the leopard change his spots? From my position as her nephew, I was pretty often

in charge on these occasions ; and as I found that my advance in her good graces was in a direct ratio with the number of people I could explain to her, the number of spicy bits of gossip I could *apropos* retail, and the number of swells with whom I appeared to be on a footing of acquaintance, I took care that my relative should in this respect get her pennyworth, even at some sacrifice of veracity on my part. I fear, indeed, I must confess that I took a mischievous pleasure in playing upon her huge faculty of wonder and reverence for the aristocracy, and in making her simple honest eyes distend in delighted astonishment.

On this occasion the good lady was in great force. "Donald! Donald!" she exclaimed in a hoarse whisper, shortly after we were seated, "who is that young lady in green, with red hair, flirting with the disgusting painted old reprobate up there? don't you see?—second tier."

"Where?—ah! yes, of course; don't *you* know them?" (surprisedly).

"No, I don't."

"Ah! odd you don't; why that's old Colonel Whistlebones, you know, and that's *the* fair one; you know what I mean *now*, of course;" and I looked at my aunt with a certain look which silenced her, partly because she was ashamed to be behind the fast scandal of the day, and partly because she was satisfied with the knowledge that there *was* a bad story which she would get out of me at another time.

"I don't see many acquaintances here," went on the old lady, sweeping her telescopes round the grand tier; "it's very odd."

Considering the part of the house she was focussing, in connection with her name and place of abode (Blogg and a shady part of Brompton), I own I did not share her surprise.

"Come, Donald," she continued, "tell me about the people up there—the grand folks, I mean. Ah! who was that you bowed to just now?" I had executed a very correct salam to the pillar which divided the two most brilliant boxes in the house.

"Oh! I bowed to the whole party," I replied, carelessly; "know them all."

"Do you?" screamed the old lady, in deep delight; "and pray who is the old dowager with the hawk's beak and false teeth?"

"Hush! my dear aunt, for heaven's sake! that's the great Scotch Duchess—the arbitress of fashion. I'm astonished" (rather disgustedly) "*you* don't know her!"

"Oh! that's *her*," cried my aunt, as if my answer had conveyed a world of intelligence; "and *you* know *her*?"

"Yes, of course" (pettishly); "why not, pray?"

"Oh! don't be cross, Donald; I'm very

glad, I'm sure," and the poor old creature looked it.

"These girls are—at least that one who shook her fan at me, is her daughter."

"Shook her fan at you! I never saw it. You must be very intimate."

"Tut, tut, aunt; how serious you are about trifles! That's Bismarck just come into the box opposite, wearing the eagle; he's been dining at Rothschild's, I know;" and I fixed my eyes on a saturnine and stock-jobbing-looking person who entered at the moment, wearing a huge red camellia in his button-hole.

"Bismarck! Rothschild! eagle!" shrieked my aunt, half rising. "Where are they?"

I felt that I had evoked a rather unmanageable demon, and amidst quite a hum of laughter I induced my aunt to sit down, and the overture began.

The performance proceeded, and I became engrossed in the music, and lost to





"Who is she? She's bowing"

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everything else, except a vaguely-irritated consciousness that my aunt's head was in a state of perpetual oscillation, and that her glasses were being worked with as many changes of position as a battery of horse-artillery in a general action. She was quiet, however, which was a mercy.

The moment the first act ended, she burst out,—“Now, Donald, do tell me who that pretty creature is—close by there; she's evidently a friend of yours, and a very particular one, judging by the way she's been looking at you, and trying to catch your eye. Who is she? She's bowing.”

Still engrossed with musical thoughts, I answered at random, and looking straight before me, but with the instinct of my office as cicerone,—“Oh! that's Lady Eva Tressilian—a very nice girl.”

“Lady Eva Tressilian! upon my word, Mr Donald, you seem to be getting on in the world; nothing but lords and ladies.

How pleased your dear uncle would have been! But I always said your proper sphere was in high society. Why don't you look at her? She's ogling you again."

I woke from my reverie, and turned my head in the direction of my aunt's gaze and there, sure enough, in the second row from us, and almost in front, was a young lady, to all appearance, as my aunt said, ogling me tremendously. As my eyes met hers, her expression became something more than one of mere friendly recognition, and with an ineffable smile she slowly bowed her beautiful head. No doubt of it! Great heavens! what was this? Perhaps she had a cast in her eye, and was bowing to some one behind; perhaps she was a juvenile acquaintance suddenly grown into womanhood; perhaps—horror of horrors—perhaps she was a "horse-breaker!" These thoughts flitted like lightning through my mind as I felt that her face (and a very beautiful face

it was) was unknown to me. But here was my aunt, to whom I had inadvertently announced her as the Lady Eva Tressilian, sitting by my side, panting to see the impressive salutation (which was now repeated) of a female aristocrat returned by her nephew. There was nothing for it, then, but to return the greeting with as much impressiveness as I dared. I did so, my face blazing with guilt and shame. These symptoms were observed and misinterpreted by my aunt. She emitted a low chuckle, and nudged me with her elbow (the vulgar old harridan!) Already her active mind was, doubtless, weaving a little romance, ending with a marriage in high life—a Gothic chapel—a corpulent archbishop, and a medieval duke handing over to her nephew—the nephew of Mrs Blogg of Brompton—this beautiful fragment of the upper crust.

The next act proceeded. I tried to rivet

my attention on the stage, and on the music; that failing, I endeavoured to interest myself in all sorts of calculations and speculations—the exact spot at which the first tenor's false calf began; what it was made of, where it was made, what it cost; whether false calves are made to suit different parts,—for instance, whether there is a lover's calf and a villain's calf and a warrior's calf; then, why that part of the human body should be called a calf at all. Pshaw! it was of no use. A magnetic attraction would draw my eyes in the direction of "Lady Eva," and as surely as I looked towards her, so surely did she, sitting half *en profile*, inform herself of the circumstance, with the tail of her eye apparently, and gently, quietly, half turn her head, and favour me with one of those wistful ineffable glances which I cannot describe, but which would, I daresay, have been very pleasant if I had not felt that somehow or other I was

defrauding her out of them. They were stolen waters, yet not sweet. My aunt kept registering each glance with a nudge and a chuckle ; her head ceased to oscillate ; her eyes were glued to the chignon of the "Lady Eva." At the end of the last act but one, to free myself from the spell, I fairly rose up, and, to the disgust of my aunt, turning my back on the stage and on the enchantress, affected to survey the audience with interest. My aunt rose too ; and although conscious that her previous eccentricities and somewhat wild appearance were making her the cynosure of eyes, I preferred this to remaining under fire from the front, and to possible discovery and exposure as an impostor, or something worse, by "Lady Eva's" friends.

It was indeed a very probable and likely explanation of her first bow that she mistook me for some one else ; but it was beyond any kind of probability that the sub-

sequent and continuous battery of glances could be intended for any one about whose identity she could make any mistake. They were intended for me—*me ipsum*—in *propria persona* therefore; and what then? While I was thus meditating, my sleeve was touched by a gentleman in front, and he handed me a little three-cornered note. “Passed to me from the row in front,” he said; and as I turned to thank him, my eyes met those of “Lady Eva,” which told me two things—that the note came from her, and that it was to be treated clandestinely. The transaction, for a wonder, escaped the lynx eyes of aunt Blogg, and I was able when we sat down, by placing the billet in the bottom of my hat, to read it undetected. It was addressed—

“CAPTAIN B——”

So! there was no mistake. (I believe I

have forgotten to introduce myself as Captain Donald Bruce.) It ran thus :—

“At Aldershot? My uncle has invited you for Thursday. If you can trust yourself to come *as a stranger*, come, for this death in life of never never meeting kills me. Give me a little confidential nod if you *are* at Aldershot, and try not to be angry at this indiscretion of, dear angel, your
PARROQUET.”

Now, what the deuce did all this mean? Was this young person a practical joker—a Theodore Hook in petticoats? or was the aviary from which this parroquet had escaped a lunatic asylum, or what?

She knew me, evidently—knew my movements—Aldershot, and so on; but how? And how in the name of wonder did I come to be her “angel”?—I who, to the best of my belief, had never set eyes on her before?

And then the idea of my being any one's angel!—there was some fun in that—ha! ha! for I was not a lady's man—in fact, ladies detested me. Odd, perhaps, but they did. In Montreal they called me the “Caledonian bore,” and in Plymouth, “Ursa Major.” I was too sincere and dignified for them, I used to think, and couldn't condescend to small talk, and they didn't appreciate me; but I didn't mind—rather liked it, in fact—and I was left alone and allowed to follow my own tastes, which induced me to prefer the society of Blackstock of ours (widower, and from the ranks), and to pass my evening in talking shop with him over a sensible pipe of cavendish and a quiet glass of grog, rather than to go dressing up in mufti after mess, and dangling about in the ball-rooms of garrison towns, with the off-chance of enjoying one thirty-sixth share in the society of the one (for there never is more than one) passable

girl of the place. No; that sort of nonsense didn't suit me. I wasn't a marrying man—never had been in love in my life, and never meant to be. I was wedded to my sword, had laid my heart on the altar of my country, and that sort of thing; so the idea of my being the private angel of this or any other young female was a trifle too good—ha! ha! How old Blackstock would laugh, to be sure! And her uncle, whose hospitable intentions were here announced—who was he? And “if I could *trust myself* to meet her as a stranger.” Well, without an overweening self-confidence, that appeared to be a matter of no great difficulty—ha! ha! At these thoughts grimly smiling, I raised my head, and there was her ladyship at it again—“on the ogle,” as Artemus Ward would have said. She elevated her eyebrows interrogatively; and I—what else could I do?—gave her the “confidential little nod,” thereby admitting

that at present I did hail from Aldershot. Two elderly ladies were with her, and a young lad—a most unexceptionably respectable-looking party ; and the pretty girl herself, despite her eyeing manœuvres, was an artless, innocent-looking creature, to all appearance sane and incapable of practical joking.

Perhaps in some previous state of existence the Parfoquet and I had known and loved each other, and it was given to her alone to preserve the memory of our passion ; perhaps I was asleep and dreaming. I would pinch myself and try ; and I was just going to do so when the husky voice of my aunt hissed into my ear, in accents of consternation, “ Donald, *did* you hear me order a lobster ? ” and saved me the trouble. At this moment the Parroquet and party rose and left the house, my aunt digging away at my ribs with all her might to call attention to the fact. I kept my eyes on

the stage, however, drawing from my relative the angry remark, that "she wondered her ladyship" (ha! ha!) "would trouble to look at such a mannerless goose." She was in a flutter of delight, though, and I felt that if I had been placed in a compromising position with regard to "Lady Eva," I was in a much more favourable one with my aunt (testamentarily speaking) than when the evening began. After all, then, it was over. I could make nothing of it, so what was the good of puzzling? Some fellows would have understood it, no doubt, but I didn't. I didn't understand women, nor they me; so, hang it! I would think no more of the matter; and I dismissed the subject,—although, by the way, I had to draw awfully on my imagination to satisfy my aunt as we struggled *tête-à-tête* with the lobster, which had *not* been forgotten.

The duties of my profession took me back to Aldershot, where my regiment was then

quartered, next evening. Now the great majority of fellows—I mean average military fellows—would no doubt have wasted many succeeding days in prowling about Farnham, Farnborough, Sandhurst, Tongham, and their dependencies, in search of that mysterious bird the Parroquet, hunting, as Milton did, for the errant damosel who found him asleep under the greenwood tree, and who (stopping short, it is to be hoped, of the freedom which Diana took with Endymion under similar circumstances) placed on his breast a sonnet laudatory of his veiled eyes, and inspired him, as the story goes, when all his huntings were in vain, with some shadowy idea of a lost Paradise; but I did nothing of the sort. Blackstock and I guffawed discreetly over the adventure on the night of my return, but very shortly dismissed it in favour of a capital new theory which he had started about the true position of the left heels of rear-rank men

in the act of loading, which we agreed might probably lead to his professional advancement; and so I thought no more about the matter, life being, in my opinion, too short to bother one's self about mysteries that cannot be solved by twenty minutes' good close thinking, which I had already squandered on the subject. Wedded to my profession as I then was, and taking an absorbed interest even in its minutest details, Aldershot was to me an Elysium. I fear it is not so to the present race of officers; but there is a good time coming; and now that men of the large military experience of Mr Trevelyan have taken the army in hand, a great regeneration is to be looked for. But to me, even in that pre-Trevelyan era, Aldershot was Elysium, the Long Valley as delectable as Tempe's pleasant vale; and Eelmoor Common, like Rosherville Gardens, "the only place to spend a happy day." It had one immense advantage for a man who,

like me, wished to immerse himself in professional avocations, that there he was free from the social interruptions which belong to most other country quarters. At Aldershot soldiers are a drug in the market, an eyesore and a nuisance to the neighbourhood; and besides, any one who took to the promiscuous entertainment of such a host would find his time pretty well occupied, and his banker's balance somewhat impaired by the process.

"Yes, here," I used to think, exultingly, "one is at last free from the perpetual nuisance of civilian society."

But an officious friend of mine—the vicar of our parish—on hearing that I was going to sojourn at the camp, had insisted on sending a letter of introduction on my behalf to a friend of his who had a villa on the outskirts of F——, only a few miles off. The result was an unsuccessful attempt on the part of Mr Lewis (the friend) to make

my acquaintance by calling upon me, and before I had time to return the civility, he invited me to dine with him at his residence, Carysfort Villa. The day of the dinner-party was in the end of the week succeeding that in which befell my romantic adventure at the opera ; and though I hated and detested alien and promiscuous feeding, I had felt bound, out of respect for my clerical friend, to accept the invitation. When the day arrived, Jack Leslie, my subaltern—the privileged wag, cool hand, and odd fish of the regiment—offered to drive me over to F—— in his dog-cart, and bring me back at night. Jack was a fellow cursed with a paradoxical sort of laziness, which induced him to take any amount of trouble to avoid an act of routine. He liked nothing so much as shirking mess ; but as the authorities regarded this proclivity of his with disfavour, he was always glad to get an excuse of some sort for in-

dulging in it. On this occasion, when he said, "Hang it, it's too hot to be bothered dressing for mess to-night, and sitting a hot hour and a half in the mess-tent! I'll tool you over to F——, drop you at your eating-place, go on to the inn, dine quietly, and pick you up when the feast is over; and I'll take my key-bugle with me, and have a jolly good practice in the inn garden, where no one can object." When he said this, it was clearly not my part to throw stones at Jack's little peculiarities (I having no conveyance of my own); so I gladly accepted his offer, and in due time we were *en route*.

CHAPTER III.

“There is a fat friend in your master's house
That kitchened me for you to-day at dinner.”

—*Comedy of Errors.*

“WHERE does the old bloke live?” inquired Jack, as we entered the outskirts of the place.

“Oh! somewhere hereabouts — one of these villas we’re coming to; the name is sure to be painted on the gate in big letters: drive slow, and we’ll hit it off.”

St John Villa, Palmerston House, Derby Vale, Cambridge Cottage, were all passed successively, the names duly blazoned, as I had surmised. “Go on, Jack; that’s Carlisle Villa—I want Carysfort,” said I, as he pulled up at the first-named house.

Driving slowly along, and scanning all the gate-posts, we arrived at last opposite a house of much more imposing size than its neighbours. It stood back from the road only a very short distance, however; and its pleasure-grounds, laid out in flower-beds and studded with rare shrubs, was separated from the public way by a low iron ornamental fence, clustered with creepers. A party of gentlemen in evening dress and without hats were lounging round the door; and as we came in sight, a stout elderly party, bald, rubicund, and white-waist-coated, came quickly to the gate, waving his hand, and inviting our approach.

"This way, Captain," he cried, in a rich port-winy voice—"this way. Glad to see you—come in—mind that post, and keep off the turf—there!"

We pulled up in front of the door, and I, descending, was warmly shaken hands with by the host, who rattled on with extraor-

dinary volubility—"Warm weather, awful! aint it? so we're receiving *al fresco*, as the Italians say, you see; and I did suggest to Jemima that we should dine *al fresco* too, under that big walnut-tree; couldn't be more comfortable, could we? but women are obstinate! She wouldn't have it—afraid of insects and the public gaze. Public gaze, forsooth! damme! I aint ashamed of my guests or my dinner, I said. But, bless me! it's dinner-time—how about your trap? you can put up here, and your man can have his dinner, and all that. Take" (to Jack) "the trap round to the back, my man, by the left there, past the dog-kennel, and tell the coachman to make you all right."

This was a dig for Jack, whose excessively horsy attire not unnaturally led to the mistake. I explained, however, that I had a message for the town, and that "my fellow" would go on and stable at the inn.

“Very well, very well—do as you please ; plenty of stabling, if you like ; but—ah ! walk in, gentlemen—walk in. You know your way—walk in, and walk up to the drawing-room. I knew you at once, Captain, although I’m sure I don’t know when I saw you before. It was only once, I think—at old what-d’ye-call-’em’s ; but you handsome dogs, you see, you make an impression—hey ? ha ! ha !—and when I saw you looking about at the gates, I said to myself, ‘Here he is, and no mistake.’ You’ve been all over the world since we met, I’ve no doubt, fighting the battles of your Queen and—eh ? here’s the drawing-room. Jemima, here’s the Captain—my friend the Captain ; you never saw him before, I think.”

A correspondingly stout and benign lady answered to the name of Jemina, and came forward to welcome me.

“I’m delighted to see you,” she said ; “our good friends told us you *were* to be

at Aldershot, and without being actually certain that you were there now, we wrote on chance to ask you to join our little party, and I'm so glad we've been so fortunate."

There was a large party in the room of ladies and gentlemen, to several of whom I was introduced, and specially to a lovely creature, to whom the host presented me, styling her "My niece, Lady Rose O'Shea." He had evidently forgotten my name, and was hazy about my antecedents, and introduced me in a very general way as "My friend the Captain from Aldershot." I could not be surprised at this. His bee-like manner of fluttering from subject to subject made it unlikely that he should remember anything, except in a general way. Probably it was a triumph that he had grasped the idea that I *was* a captain, and from Aldershot, for he insisted a good deal upon it.

"Well, well, well!" he said, "time and

tide wait for no man, no more should dinner, eh? ha! ha! and dinner's ready these ten minutes, but there's somebody wanting, I know; there are only twenty-four here, and we dine twenty-five: who's amissing? I say, Jemima, who is it? Ah! I see; as usual, it's that cat Polly. But talk of the devil—eh? here she is; the late Miss Polly; ha! ha! Now come away, my Lady Rose, take your old uncle's arm; and Jemima, you and the Captain from Aldershot will form up the parade, and march on the commissariat department: come away, my Lady—ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!" and he went braying and guffawing out of the room.

The "cat Polly's" entrance may have been a subject of mere gastronomic interest to the rest of the party; to me it was somewhat more, being, in fact, as tremendous and startling as if a bomb-shell had descended through the roof into the drawing-room of Carysfort Villa. The "cat Polly,"

in a word, was no other than the Lady Eva Tressilian—the Parroquet of my opera-house adventure. There was the same look as her eyes met mine for an instant,—not a look of surprise—she evidently expected me—but a look of—well, I'll call it fond but furtive interest. I was not presented to her, and had no time for reflection or astonishment, for the hostess began to make her dispositions of the march.

“Dear me, dear me!” said the vulgar but hearty old owl, “who’s to take who? I don’t know. Mr King, will you take Mrs Hicks? No, that won’t do. Mr Thomson, will *you* take Mrs Hicks? Dear, dear! that’s not it either. Captain, will you take my niece, Miss Richmond? But ah! you’re to take me—I remember *that*. Oh! do somebody take somebody. Badger will be furious!”

The old lady appeared to be in a regular muddle, and not foreseeing much prospect

of a move, I suggested laughingly that the ladies should go out first, unescorted, and the gentlemen after—an idea which was gratefully received and acted upon, the honour of conducting the hostess, however, continuing to me.

“It’s a good plan that of yours,” she said.

“Yes, it saves trouble; *we* always do it at Court—borrowed it originally from Constantinople, I believe,” said I, dropping instinctively from the style of the woman into the vein which had such a potent effect on aunt Blogg.

“Indeed! and very sensible—quite what I would expect of her Majesty. You see my husband is a great stickler for what he calls precedence. It wasn’t always the way with him, but ever since his sister married into high life he’s taken to it—says it’s the right thing, and must be done; and he is very troublesome, I assure you. Whenever we have a dinner-party he gives me so many

lectures and instructions and directions that my head gets quite addled, that it does, just like it was now, and I can remember nothing—whether an alderman goes before a rector, or a sheriff before a lawyer, or what not; but he can't be angry when he hears it's Court fashion." And so we entered the room, the lady screaming out, apologetically, "It's the Court fashion, Badger; the Captain's always there, and he says it's their rule: and what's good for the goose is good for the gander, so don't you scold me."

"Tut, tut, tut, Jemima! who ever heard me scold? But find your places, ladies and gentlemen—shake together somehow; there's turtle, mind, and it don't eat well iced, although we drink iced punch with it, eh? ha! ha!"

The process of shaking together was a matter of some time. Ladies plumped down together in coveys, and gentlemen followed suit; wives got next husbands, and brothers

next sisters ; guests mistook portly waiters for honoured guests, and politely offered them the *pas*, and so on. On the whole, the system as practised at the Courts of London and Stamboul was not on this occasion a success ; but at last we got seated. Half-way down the table, on the opposite side, sat the “ cat Polly.”

Consuming my turtle, I reviewed the situation. It was baffling. Who the deuce was the “ cat Polly ” ? She knew I was coming here — this must be the occasion to which she had alluded in her note, on which I was to make an effort to conduct myself like a stranger. My host, Mr Lewis, then, must be her uncle. It was surely quite impossible that I could once have known her, and—— pshaw ! impossible. I was rather surprised, too, at the style of people who were my entertainers. They were not what I had expected from the description of my introducer, the old

vicar at home, who had spoken of them as "his dear and early quiet friends, who would be happy to give me at least a warm welcome in their frugal home." Mrs Lewis, too, had invited me in a half-apologetic way ; said there would be "no party, no inducements, and hoped that a hearty welcome might compensate for 'simple fare and other deficiencies.'" But this was not my idea of a frugal home ; a table blazing with plate—turtle-soup—half a score of servants—more than a score of guests—all this could scarcely be described as "no party, simple fare, and other deficiencies ;" and as for quietness, that rollicking, blatant, babbling old party at the foot of the table, how could he be called a quiet man ? or his wife, could she ? and Badger—what the deuce did that mean when the man's name was Lewis ? A term of endearment probably, but an oddish one to be shouted down a forty-feet room by a quiet

woman to her quiet husband. Thus puzzling, I consumed my turtle and sipped my punch; but when these were disposed of and I found myself still in the dark, I dismissed speculation. I acted on my usual principle, which said, "If you ever do stumble on a moment or two worth living for, give yourself all to them while they last — '*cras ingens iterabimus æquor.*'" Here were some moments worth living for — gastronomically at least — so I yielded myself to the joys of the Sybarite, wreathed me a garland of the vine, decked the bald front of Father Time with roses—that is, dipped boldly into the very dry champagne of Badger-Lewis, toyed with undeniable *entrées*, grappled with the inevitable haunch, conversed slightly with Mrs Badger, and from time to time, emboldened by that which maketh glad the heart of man, contrary to my usual custom, let my eyes go roving down the table, till they rested on a

face and a pair of eyes—which—which—the like of which—tut, tut!—which appeared to me to have more attractive power than any I had previously encountered. “Ah! the Parroquet!” I hear you say. Shrewdly put, but incorrect. True it is that my roving glances were perpetually intercepted—“fielded,” as it were, by that “pervigil ales”—but their real destination was the Lady Rose O’Shea who sat beyond.

Dinner went on, and a good dinner it was all through. The company was by no means so *recherché* as the viands were: it was in some instances nondescript, but the prevailing flavour was certainly of the Stock Exchange. There was indeed not a little vulgarity, but it was a hearty, joyous vulgarity, suggestive of exuberant animal spirits and much physical power. The champagne was in rivers. The bottles were invariably opened in the dining-room, and the sound of their explosions mingled with the roar of

ever-increasing talk, with the crash of teeth, with the jingling of knives, with the clink of glasses; their corks ricocheted from the cornices and played fitfully on the features of the guests. Everywhere the improvised waiter lurched dangerously about on his mission of destruction, bumping occiputs with sharp-cornered dishes, and embellishing silk, satin, and broadcloth with buttery cauliflower and glutinous sauce. The "hall was filled with steam of flesh," and the guests fed "like horses when you hear them feed." As for the laughter, it was that unquenched laughter of the immortals when they lie beside their nectar and shake their ambrosial curls. It was an Olympus of revelling City gods, over whom Badger-Lewis beamed presidential—Jupiter Opt. Max.

Somewhat incongruously placed in this scene of unsophisticated delights were the graceful forms of the two ladies to whom my attention had been especially directed—the

two ladyships—the real Lady Rose and the spurious Lady Eva. No doubt beauty and grace could scarcely have found better foils for their attractions than this festive board afforded, surrounded as it was with the distending forms and gulose features of these gormandising men of scrip. But their beauty required no foil, no softening medium of an atmosphere misty with the spray of sparkling wine. Gems of purest water are independent of adventitious enhancement, and each of these girls was a gem in her own way. Mrs Badger-Lewis was hungry, and I may add thirsty, and the preoccupation of ministering to these wants, combined with a slight poverty in conversational topics, kept her silent, and left me leisure to observe the humours of the scene. I have said before that I was not a lady's man; but here, to-day, whether from a subtle pleasure in contemplating incongruities, or that my art-nature (for I am a bit of an artist) was

mysteriously worked upon by some proportional harmony in the facial lines of the girl, I could not then decide, but certain it is that I stared horribly at Lady Rose. It assuredly was not strange (under the circumstances) that the Lady Eva should attract my regards, as she did from time to time; but the other fascination—that was beyond the region of my experiences. And there was something else that puzzled me; it was that in the occasional return-glances of Lady Rose I could not but observe a certain intelligence, by no means like that of the Parroquet,—a look in which curiosity, disapprobation, and amusement struggled for the mastery. I think it is an extremely difficult matter to delineate by word-painting the niceties of female beauty, and I approach the task of describing these two ladies with a humble consciousness of my own inadequacy to do them justice. I am sadly destitute of the technical jargon which is part

of the stock-in-trade of those who unfold tales bearing upon matters erotic. Pathetic eyelashes, Madonna mouths, married brows, swimming eyes, impossible combinations of non-existing tints, and the mysterious terms of physiognomical architecture—these are machineries I know not how to work. I suppose the reader would not be satisfied if I was simply to say that they were both “ineffably beautiful” in their respective styles of dark and fair? Very well, then, I will give my own “outsider’s” view of the two nymphs as they sat at meat among the satyrs.

The Parroquet was what I have heard ladies call a “professed beauty”—by which they appear to mean, not that the lady to whom the term is applied merely thinks herself or “sets up” for a beauty, but that her charms are of that undeniable stamp which it baffles even envy to explain away. Her figure was tall and graceful, her head small, beautifully

set on and carried ; her lovely face devoid of the coldness and insipidity which so often belong to features of what I believe to be called the Grecian type. What face could be wanting in expression when adorned with such eyes ? dark blue as the sky on a summer night, and brilliant as its stars, and with that look of slumbering fire (as if they *could* look *such* things) that is hardly ever seen combined with a fair complexion ; and Polly's skin was beautifully fair, and her hair bright as a golden harvest-field. Is that enough ? No — her dress. Ah ! her dress. I can say nothing more about it than that it was pink, and that her head was crowned with a chaplet of large white daisies ; and so much for the Parroquet.

The Lady Rose I can much less easily describe. Somehow my gaze seemed to lose itself so hopelessly in the pellucid depths of a pair of soft brown eyes, that I could scarcely get it back to observe anything

else. Soft brown eyes! does that describe them? is that enough? No, they were something more; the rays of light seemed to fall lovingly upon them, and form over them a sort of lustrous veil—a softening medium through which a pure spirit within might gaze upon the world and see but half its deformity. These eyes monopolised my attention so much on this occasion, that I only carried away, besides, an impression of a sweet and merry smile, frequently displaying the finest teeth in the world; of two mischievous dimples in cheeks that bloomed like her namesakes the roses; of a great wealth of dark auburn hair; and of a figure not tall, but light and airy as Titania's. And now for that confounded millinery! Well, make the most of a white muslin dress and a wreath of green oak-leaves. "*Sapienti sit satis.*"

The fixing on my mind of these impressions, such as they were, was not to be

achieved by a slight inspection ; and the rage of her hunger and her thirst being appeased at length, my hostess, glad probably to find a topic on which she was at home, began to rally me with elephantine badinage on my continued scrutiny of the two young ladies.

“I wish you had made a better dinner,” she began. “I’m quite cross with you for not trying that *vol au vent*, and I don’t believe you even knew there were truffles in the *pâté* ; you took none, I saw that. But you’ll take some ice-pudding ? You know what cold pudding’s a cure for ? ha, ha ! and if you go on as you’re doing you’ll soon require it. I’ve watched you ; I’ve seen you. Ah ! you military men ! you military men ! you’re all the same—can’t keep your eyes off a pretty girl. Not that I blame you for it here, I’m sure ; for, I must say it that shouldn’t say it, there are few prettier girls than my two nieces.”

“May I ask which two ladies have the honour of enjoying that relationship?” I inquired, as innocently as possible.

“Oh, how sly we are! as if you didn’t know, when they’ve come between you and your dinner, and your duty to me too, sir; not that I mind that, for, between ourselves, I like to eat my dinner without chattering; and I know I’m old and fat, and military men don’t like what’s old and fat—you needn’t interrupt me with your nonsense; and my nieces (since you pretend not to know) are, that one in pink, with the yellow hair and the daisies—that’s my niece Mary; and the other in white, with the oak-leaves, that’s Rose—Lady Rose—my darling and her uncle’s darling; and she ought to be the darling of the whole world, for she’s the best and sweetest and—but, bless me! how I run on! You see it’s her simplicity and un-stuck-upness that takes us all. We’re not fine people—not the company she’s used to

at home—but she comes among us and never seems to notice any difference in our ways, or to be put out by things that put out Mary there, for instance—not but she's a dear nice good girl too, with a kind heart of her own—but Rose is my pet. Her mother, Badger's " (Badger's !) " sister Susan, you see, had a good fortune of her own ; and her father, the Earl of Belturbet, was a poor Irish lord, with a large family by a former countess—which accounts for our having to do with the aristocracy. But Susan has a family too, and the Earl's an expensive man, and gets through the money I fear, if he hasn't got through it already ; and, altogether, poor Rose isn't an heiress, like her cousin Mary, who is an only child. Her mother, another sister of Badger's, had a fortune too, and her father was a poor dragoon captain—which accounts for our connection with the army. He's a General now, and a ' Sir '—Sir Roland Richmond—a stuck-up

padded old toad, with a head like a cockatoo—that is, when he's in full dress on the Queen's birthday at a review in Hyde Park, which is the only time I ever saw him, for he's too great for us, and not like poor Bel-turbet, who has no pride about him, and will borrow a hundred pounds from Badger just as if he wasn't a lord and descended from the emperors of Kerry. And it's seldom the General allows Mary to come here, and it's only because Rose comes that she's allowed, I know that; but I snap my fingers at the old fool, and he knows it, and—but, oh dear me! what a one you must think me, running on about what's nothing to nobody but ourselves, and there's Badger looking towards you.”

The good lady had certainly contrived to make her statement pretty exhaustive of her subject. Her style of delivery suggested the idea that she had been wound up (and so perhaps she had—by the champagne) to the

speaking - point like a machine, and was bound to fire off a string of jerky sentences, and then come to an abrupt end with a metallic click. I cannot say, however, that I found her statement uninteresting. But at this point her husband interposed, bawling down the table to me, "I've been trying to catch your eye for the last half-hour, Captain; an awful talker is Mrs B. Once let her button-hole you and you're done. Be thankful to me for saving you from her long tongue for a minute. Have a glass of wine with me? Hock? champagne? sherry? what shall it be?"

"Champagne, please."

"Ah! you like my champagne? show your taste—import it myself. Drinking wine with each other's out of fashion, they tell me; I don't care, I like it; the wine don't taste worse for a nod and smile; but I suppose you gay dragoons are too fashionable to hang on to old ways?"

Blinking the question of "dragoon," which might be only Badger's way of expressing his ideal of a very haughty and *recherché* class of officer, I replied, "On the contrary, my dear sir, at our mess we do hang on to the custom very much ; and when a stranger dines with us he sometimes finds it difficult to meet his engagements in this way and preserve his equilibrium."

Good heavens ! what had I said ? As I finished my sentence I swept my glance in the direction of the Parroquet, and was thunderstruck to behold on her face a look of horror and surprise ; her eyes were dilated, her face deadly pale, and she stared at me with a fixity that was quite unnerving. What had I said ? Had the nectar of the gods been too much for me ? Were all these immortals round the table there tipsy, and had I, unconsciously advancing with the common standard, also become as the beasts that perish ? and, being in my cups,

had I sworn, or in some other way misconducted myself?

“Polly!” cried her uncle, who was undeniably a little flustered with the grape. “Polly is quite shocked, Captain, at the idea of you fashionable dragoons” (dragoons again!) “being so unfashionable. See how the girl’s staring! Oh Lord! this bangs Banagher altogether! ha! ha! ha!” All regards being turned on Polly, the colour flushed back to her cheeks, her eyes dropped, and with a semi-hysterical laugh she muttered something about “thinking she saw a wasp.” This subterfuge might pass with the rest, but it didn’t deceive me. I was undoubtedly the wasp she had been staring at—but why with this expression? Perhaps a servant had upset large quantities of custard and cream over my shoulders, or some other such *contretemps* of the table had made me a ridiculous or loathly sight. I reassured myself on this head; but, after

all, nothing of the sort could have agitated a young lady as this young lady seemed to be agitated. Confound these mysteries! they were beginning to be too much of a good thing. After a short interval Badger again addressed me: "I suppose you Aldershot gentlemen are pretty much on the road between London and the camp?"

"Some are," I said.

"Ah! a gay life," continued Badger, "but a hard one; work all day and pleasure all night; drill and parade, ball and opera—burning the candle at both ends; killing work, eh?"

"Well," I said, "I can't accuse myself of much dissipation; I was at the opera" (and I turned my eyes full on the Parroquet) "for the first time this season last Saturday night."

The effect was unpleasantly beyond what I had anticipated. The poor girl gave a

sort of sob, half rose from her seat, and would have fallen but for one of the immortals who supported her. Her aunt charged down upon her, and she was hustled out of the room in a fainting condition, escorted by all the ladies. The worthy Badger looked distressed. "Poor thing, poor thing!" he said; "it's the infernal heat. She's not such a goose as to be annoyed at my little fun; no, no, it's the heat. Peters, take up a large glass of brandy to Miss Richmond, and hot water and nutmeg, d'ye hear? Nothing like strong brandy-punch for quieting the nerves; tell her to toss it off. Poor thing, poor thing! it's the thunder in the air that's upset her, no doubt of it. Captain, help yourself and pass the claret, and we'll drink her better health, poor thing!"

I did as I was bid; I drank to her better health with all my heart, for a solution of the mysteries dawned upon me suddenly. The girl must be a maniac, out

for a lucid interval which had abruptly concluded.

"And how is my worthy old friend?" inquired Badger of me when tranquillity had been restored.

I replied that the old gentleman (alluding to our vicar, in virtue of whose introduction I believed myself to be there) was hale and hearty, and doing his duty like a man.

"That he always did, and always will do, honest old Jack," rejoined Badger.

There is no great resemblance between "Jack" and "Ephraim"—the vicar's real name; but "Jack" was probably an old school sobriquet.

"Does he ever sing 'Spankadillo' now?" continued my host.

"I certainly never heard him," I replied; and indeed it was just as likely that the Pope, in full canonicals, should sing 'Spankadillo' (which I took to be a comic song)

as that our revered pastor should indulge in such an eccentricity.

"Ah! you should have heard him sing it, and seen him do the dancing with his face blacked; it was a great sight; and when old Jack was a little tight, it was quite glorious—quite."

"It must have been," I heartily assented, as a vision of the vicar, with his rusty black coat and gaiters, and solemn lantern jaws, performing in a state of inebriety the alleged act of buffoonery, rose to my mind.

"He's getting old now," continued Badger, "but he's as game as a chicken; it would have done your heart good to see him lick the 'welsher' the Derby before last. He's told you about *that* of course?"

I shook my head with a look of inquiring puzzlement.

"Oh! come, I must tell you about that

—but, I say, it's getting late, we ought to join the ladies; and here's coffee."

The conversation then dropped. "If the mysterious conduct of Polly is caused by lunacy," I thought, "this nonsense of Mr Badger-Lewis may be fairly ascribed to intoxication. Yes, the Badger is certainly tipsy." But I rose from the table in a haze.

"I think," cried the host, when we got out of the dining-room, "the ladies will be in the garden. My wife lives in it, this hot weather: let us join them."

"Come into the garden, Maud,'" he sang, dancing up and laying hands on one of the guests, with whom he whirled round several times, ending by nearly falling down a flight of steps which led from the hall into the garden.

This was the Rev. Ephraim Rasper's rather quiet and early friend!

The garden in its arrangements was as odd and rambling as the mind of its pro-

prietor seemed to be ; if there were no flowers—and they were conspicuous by their absence—this want was compensated for, after a fashion, by an amount of garniture due rather to art than to nature. There were, indeed, plenty of trees and shrubs of a sort—cedars, cactuses, aloes, araucarias, and suchlike ; but these passed unnoticed in the presence of a Chinese joss-house in bamboo, a Grecian temple of heath and moss, and the model of a Gothic cathedral woven from the flexible branches of the willow. Then there was a fountain and a bowling-green, an archery-ground and a croquet-lawn, a rookery and an aquarium. Everywhere the surrounding scene was reflected in those globular mirrors which delight the taste of our Continental neighbours. On the whole, it was like a paddock in which had been collected, for auctioneering purposes, the “ plant ” of several *al fresco* places of amusement.

"Yes," said my host, in answer to some complimentary expressions of mine—"yes, we *do* think it is rather a success. There's a dash of the—of the medieval about it, eh? Lord Byron would have been at home here, sir: eastern climes and starry skies—that sort of thing, eh? My wife says it's like a scene out of Lalla Rookh—perhaps it is. I'm sure it was the other night when the Aldermen were dining with us, and we had fireworks, 'Elysian bouquets,' 'Arctic messengers,' and 'Chains of the gods.' Making it look like Lalla Rookh costs a pretty pennyworth, I can tell you, and I'm a prudent man; but it don't do to let mule twist and grey shirtings imagine that everything else is as flat as ditch-water. Do you play bowls? we've light for half an hour, I think. Hi! hi! Simpson, Bree, Dobson. Hi! you fellows! bowls, bowls, bowls! Come along, Captain."

"I don't play, thanks. I would rather

walk about and look at the wonders of your fairy-land."

"Well, well, Liberty Hall; as you please. Here are some of the ladies—Jemima and Rose, well met. We're going to have half an hour's bowls, and the Captain here wants to look about him and admire all your nonsense."

"My nonsense, forsooth!"

"Yes, ma'am, so you and Rose must take him and show him your greatest triumph, the waterfall. Is it playing to-night?"

"Of course it is. I ordered it to be turned on at six o'clock."

"It's like your band, Captain, you see: it plays on guest-nights."

"I must go in myself," said Mrs Badger-Lewis, "to look after poor Mary; but Rose, darling, you'll take the Captain to the fall, won't you?"

"Oh! I shall be very happy. But where are the other ladies?"

"I suspect they will be anxious to stay beside the bowlers, but they ought to see the fall too ; send them on to it, Badger."

"All right."

The worthy couple then left us, and Lady Rose and I were alone together.

CHAPTER IV.

“Double, double, toil and trouble.”—*Macbeth*.

LADY ROSE and I were alone together! I don't think I had ever been *tête-à-tête* with a lady before (except, perhaps, with my aunt on boxing-day) without wishing myself somewhere else. At present, however, I had no such feelings. I felt drawn towards my fair companion by a mysterious attraction which I could not define; and, moreover, I had a strong practical purpose in view, that of unriddling the mystery of her cousin's mania, and of discovering, if possible, in what way I was connected with it. On the whole, therefore, I had no inclination to run away, but felt so easy and fluent

that I thought to myself, with some triumph, "If I select the weather as an initial topic, I do so out of respect to conventionalities, and not from necessity, by any means;" and thus advertising myself, I began the conversation as we strolled in the direction of the waterfall.

"What a heavenly evening! and how pleasant this coolness is, after the dreadful heat we have had all day!"

"It is a pleasant evening," she remarked, briefly.

"You can't fancy," I continued, "how delightful it is to escape from the dusty camp into a scene like this!"

"Ah! it is very dusty in the camp, I suppose."

"Oh! dreadfully dusty. I suppose you've never been to the Sahara?"

"No, never."

"Well, I have" (a fiction, but she seemed so cool, it was necessary to rouse her a little).

"Really!"

"I have, and Aldershot strongly reminds me of it."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, particularly in a dust-storm."

"Oh!"

"Yes, particularly."

"Ah!"

Somehow the Sahara didn't seem to take.

"But here," continued I, gracefully waving my hand, and changing the subject, "here we are in an oasis."

"Did you ever see one?" she inquired.

"Oh! hundreds and thousands of them."

How one falsehood does lead to another!

"I should have thought this was not the least like one," she continued.

"Well, it isn't, you know," I agreed.

"I thought you just said it was."

"Well, it is to a certain extent." Hang it! I was beginning to wander, and she was looking so cool and surprised. "To a cer-

tain extent," I explained; "that is, there is a moral resemblance, but no physical or technical likeness."

I very painfully knew I was talking nonsense, and, worse still, I knew that she knew it. She gave me a rapid glance (perhaps she too was speculating as to the effect of the Badgerian goblets), and then quietly remarked,—

"Oh dear! don't you think we are getting a little deep?"

There was something about the girl's manner I didn't make out; something snubbing about it. I felt snubbed, and that my self-possession was oozing away. I rallied myself, however, and tried to laugh off her last remark.

"Ha! ha! No, I don't think it is very deep. If we look at it philosophically, an oasis is—as I was saying, an oasis is analogically——"

"Really, really, the weather is too hot

for metaphysics ; suppose we try something else ? ”

Ah ! there was no mistake about that—the snub direct. But with some grace, as I flatter myself, I pounced upon another subject which suggested itself, and went on. “Yes, certainly, and I ought to be ashamed of myself for not having thought of something else sooner ; and that is, to ask if your cousin is better.”

“She is a little better,” very icily.

“Ah ! I am delighted to hear it ; a thundery headache is a distressing thing.”

“It must be, but I’m not aware that she has one. I haven’t. Have you ? ”

“Oh no ! certainly not—not the least.”

“Dear me ! I thought you said some one had.”

“N-n-no.”

What an odd girl ! Her manner made me feel exceedingly foolish, and, feeling foolish, I know not why I should adhere

to my theme of a thundery headache, but I did, advancing, with no relation to the truth, the statement that our quartermaster (Blackstock, who was as healthy as an elephant in the prime of life) was a sad martyr to affections of the sort. "Really!" she replied, evidently appreciating the statement at its true value. "Poor man! I'm so sorry!"

Her voice was as musical as I expected it to be—I may say as I knew it would be—and her accent had that slight suspicion of the Irish which is sometimes noticeable in the accents of even high-bred Irish ladies, and which conveys such a charming expression of freshness and *naïveté*. Sweet as her voice was, however, I could by no means say the same of her manner or tone towards me; indeed it was pretty evident that, for some reason or another, she had the greatest difficulty in being commonly civil. But why? and then I remembered

her peculiar expression at dinner. Was I for ever to be surrounded with these mists and mysteries? What had I done? Perhaps she had found out about my operative passages; but what then? Supposing a lady bows to a man, is he to refuse to return it? Supposing she writes him a note, is he to fling it in her face? Supposing she does both, is he at once to know that she is a maniac? And why on earth did they bring her to the opera if she was insane? After all, was I her cousin's keeper? Nonsense; I wasn't going to stand it—I would probe this mystery; and so I returned to the charge.

“It is a pity your cousin is unable to be out this evening; it would have done her a world of good, I am sure.”

Lady Rose turned upon me with a sudden animation. “Knowing, as you must do, sir, the cause of her indisposition, I think you might have withheld that remark.”

Now thoroughly possessed with the idea of her cousin's insanity, I blundered on : " I really beg a thousand pardons, but as far as any *knowledge* of her malady goes, I assure you I have none. A surmise I certainly had formed, which I grieve to find is not without foundation, but I trust it is not a hopeless case ; there are so many successful systems of treatment now, provided the affliction has not been allowed to become chronic. May I ask if it is of long standing ? "

" You may certainly ask, sir, but it can scarcely be with a view to obtaining information ; the question would be more properly addressed to yourself. "

By heavens ! was this girl mad too ? Perhaps I had got into a private asylum by mistake. The host was a fair average lunatic, certainly, and the other guests and the whole entertainment were quite out of my experience. For reply I only stared at her.

“ I must say, sir,” continued the lady, “ that you astonish me.”

“ I must say, Lady Rose, that I myself *never* felt more astonished in my life.”

“ This feigned innocence, this insulting unconsciousness,” flashed out the lady, with increasing vehemence, “ is more than I can endure. I did not expect to have to thank *you* for anything, certainly, but I *do* feel sincerely obliged to you for making me so angry that I *must* throw off all considerations of civility to my uncle’s guest, and tell you how I loathe and detest your base unmanly character. Yes, and your vile conduct in winning the affections of a dear, pure-minded, loving girl, only for the gratification of your selfish vanity, and then treating her as your mood suits — *your* mood, forsooth ! — smiles one day and coldness the next. My cousin, it is true, withholds her confidence ; says little — almost nothing ; but I can see with my eyes, and I

can form conclusions for myself. This has gone on too long, sir! You shall not kill my cousin. Her health is breaking, her spirits are broken; but you shall be called to account—to account, sir! I have but to denounce you—and denounce you I will—to secure a reckoning for these accumulated insults.”

“Lady Rose,” I said, “there is some extraordinary mistake which I cannot explain, but——”

“There is no mistake—there can be no mistake. You came here deliberately on her uncle’s invitation, did you not?”

“I believe I did,” I replied.

“Ah! you are cautious, and slow to make admissions, I see; nevertheless you came here deliberately, knowing you would meet my cousin.”

“I deny that,” I said.

“You will deny, perhaps, that you re-

ceived a note from her in the opera-house last week?"

"No, I won't; but, for heaven's sake, listen to me!"

"It is quite unnecessary. As I have said, Mary is reticent. I know, however, that you received a note from her, and I do not think I can be wrong in judging that it stipulated that if you came here to-night she was to accept it as a token that you meant to put your relations with her on a proper footing immediately. It would be ridiculous to suppose anything else. And now, from her sudden indisposition, I can only surmise that you have contrived (for oh! you gay '*mangeurs de cœurs*,' as you call yourselves, have your deep well-practised arts of persecution) to communicate to her somehow that you have been graciously pleased to change your mind. The consequence is, she is violently ill. But this

must stop, sir ; it *must* and *shall* stop, Captain BURRIDGE !”

“Burridge, did you say ? Can I believe my ears ? Burridge ? What ! the old old story come to life again ! Ha ! ha ! ha ! Ha ! ha ! ha !” and I laughed long and loud. Vulgar perhaps, but quite hysterical, yet not the less displeasing to Lady Rose, who, remarking, “As you have thrown off even the outward semblance of a gentleman, I shall leave you, but do not suppose that all this shall pass with impunity,” began to walk rapidly away.

I came to myself at once. “Lady Rose,” I cried, “stop—for pity’s sake, for your own sake, for your cousin’s sake especially—stop and listen. I told you there was a mistake somewhere ; I see it now. I am not Captain Burridge.”

“What !” she exclaimed, “not Captain Burridge ? Why, I saw you once myself at

Mrs Stainton's ball, and I recognise you perfectly."

"Nevertheless I am not the man ; there is an extraordinary likeness between him and me which has produced many a *contre-temps*, but never a painful one such as this before."

"How—how can I believe this?" faltered Lady Rose, looking aghast and faint.

"Madam, you must believe it ; the situation is as painful to me as it is to you, but you may consider, I assure you, all that has passed as if it had not taken place."

"This is all very well," said Lady Rose, recovering herself, "but, pray, how do you come to personate Captain Burr ridge as my uncle's guest?"

"I don't personate him. I dine with your uncle in my own character as Captain Bruce of the — Fusiliers ; there, this is your aunt's invitation," and I handed her the note.

“ ‘Mrs Lewis presents her compliments ——’ Why, what is this?” said Lady Rose. “Mrs Lewis! she is not my aunt.”

“Not your aunt?—why, who is your aunt?”

“Mrs Badger, of course.”

“Badger-Lewis, though, or Lewis-Badger?”

“Neither the one nor the other; and I know she thinks you are Captain Burridge, for a Manchester friend asked them to be civil to Captain Burridge when he came down here; and we heard a fortnight ago that his regiment was on the way, and so he was asked for this party; and, indeed, I thought my uncle had some sort of acquaintance with him.”

“Well, I was asked to dine with a friend of our parish clergyman, a Mr Lewis, at Carysfort Villa here. I knew nothing of him, but accepted, and as I was looking for the house your uncle saw me, appar-

ently recognised me, called me in, and in I came, not doubting that he was Mr Lewis, and hence this horrible imbroglio. Now I understand all the rest." Then I told her about the opera and the state of mystification I had been in, and added : "I see now the cause of your cousin's sudden agitation at dinner. It was when I spoke for the first time (now I think of it) that her expression changed and became one of real dismay. She must then have discovered her mistake, and it was very shortly after that she fainted ; and I candidly confess to you, Lady Rose, that, under all the circumstances, I believed her to be insane. I beg you to assure her how deeply grieved I am to have been unwittingly the cause of distress to her. Pray say that I saw it was a case of mistaken identity from the first. Tell her that there is nothing uncommon in it, and that similar things have often before happened to me. As for the painful part

of her secret which you have indicated, she need not know that I have become possessed of it. If I have the happiness of again meeting you, which I hope I may, I may perhaps have an opportunity of telling you of many laughable cases that have arisen from the mistaken identity of Captain Bruce and Captain Burrige; but, meantime, I must not forget that I am in an awkward position here, and should at once take my departure, after explaining to your uncle that I am here as an impostor, though an involuntary one."

"It is very kind of you, Captain Bruce, to take such a view of the matter," said Lady Rose, "and to show such an interest in saving dear Mary's feelings; but I feel I do owe you a thousand apologies for my violence and rudeness; and then the way I abused you! Oh! I shall never be able to bear the thought of it. What can I do? What can I say?"

"Pray, Lady Rose, do *not* think of it;

and as for your violence, as you call it, you know it was not directed against me really, but against one who apparently deserves stronger treatment. For the rest, as I am certain your uncle is too good-natured to feel anything but simple amusement at this comedy of errors, I can assure you that if it had not been for the pain I have seen you and your cousin suffer, I should look upon the whole episode as simply absurd and farcical."

"I am sure you are very kind and forgiving," said Lady Rose. "Perhaps, then, we had better go back to the house."

Nothing could be kinder or gentler than her manner had now become. In her generous wish to make the *amende* for the rating she had given me, she was evidently trying to let me feel that I was the person to be commiserated under the circumstances. She seemed to feel that the rights of hospitality had somehow been violated in my person ;

and thus, from being a villain of the deepest dye, I now occupied the position of a rather high-minded martyr.

The shades of night had fallen upon our singular interview, and as we passed back through the garden (never, by the by, having reached the celebrated cascade), we found that it was deserted by the revellers. Rejoining the company after such a prolonged *tête-à-tête* would have been rather awkward under ordinary circumstances, but I knew the announcement I had to make to uncle Badger was a *coup de théâtre* which would cast everything into the shade.

We ascended to the drawing-room and entered. A lady had just finished singing a song at the piano, and our host and some of the guests were bustling about, arranging several tables for whist. Our entrance evoked a general exclamation.

"Well, my Lady Rose! well, my gallant Captain!" cried old Badger, "I thought you

had lost yourselves in my extensive domain. Did you tumble over Niagara, or what? Give an account of yourselves—ha! ha! ha!”

“Dear Rose,” chorussed the aunt, “how very imprudent of you to stay out all this time in the dew. Where ever have you been?”

“It is entirely my fault, Mrs Badger,” said I—“entirely; and I have another confession to make, which I hope will not offend you. I am sure it will take you all very much by surprise.”

Mr and Mrs Badger looked puzzled. The spinsters pricked up their ears, half anticipating some new version of “the story without an end;” and the immortals fumbled their watch-chains and looked yearningly at the cards.

“Mr Badger,” I said, “do you know who I am?”

“Know who you are, my dear sir! What an idea! What d’ye mean?”

“I mean what I say. Do you know my name?”

"Why, of course I do; you're Captain—
tut, tut!—of course I do—Captain Blundell
—no, hang me!—Blewit—Bodger. Yes,
you're Captain Bodger from Aldershot."

"No, I'm not."

"Well, well, I have a treacherous memory
for names. What does it signify? You
needn't be laughing, Jemima. Anyhow,
you're old Timbrel's friend, and you're a
Dragoon Guard, and a right good fellow
into the bargain," he added, giving me a
hearty apologetic slap on the shoulder.

"My dear sir," I replied, "I never heard
of old Timbrel in my life before, and I'm
not a Dragoon Guard; I'm a Fusilier."

Badger looked fairly bamboozled.

"Eh? what? Nonsense! Damme! it *was*
old Timbrel, and I saw you at his house with
my own blessed eyes. I did. Eh, Jemima?"

"Certainly," said Mrs Badger, "it was
Mr Timbrel who asked us to pay any little
civility we could to Captain Burridge."

“Exactly ; but I’m not Captain Burridge—I’m a Scotch impostor.”

There was a momentary silence, and then a shout of laughter, in which I myself joined.

“Well, well, well,” continued Badger, “what does it all mean ? If he’s a Scotch impostor, Jemima, you had better count the spoons,” and again Badger was overcome with mirth.

Seeing that the humour of the thing tickled the company, I continued plying our host in a serio-comic way, and at last told him how the matter really stood. Whereupon the mirth was redoubled, and when it subsided, old Badger heartily gave me his hand, and clapped me on the back, saying,—

“Well, it’s been my very good luck, I’m sure, to make your acquaintance, and I hope you’ll consider it all the same as a regular introduction, and come and see us often again, if our bad dinner hasn’t frightened

you ; but, Lord bless us ! when I think of it, it nearly kills me. There was I talking away about old Timbrel's tomfooleries, and you never saying a word, looking as grave as a judge—oh Lord ! oh Lord !” and the old gentleman was off again. “And it was Lewis you were to have dined with ? Well, I've swindled him out of your good company ; but it oughtn't to be lost what a neighbour gets. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll call on Lewis to-morrow morning ; I've never called on him yet—not from not wishing to be neighbourly, but somehow one puts these things off—and now this will be a rare excuse. I'll call on him to-morrow morning and make your apologies and tell him the fun ; and I'll tell you what, we'll have some more fun : I'll ask Lewis to come and dine, and you must come, and we'll get this other Captain to come the same day, and we'll compare notes. What a lark ! and you're really so like ; but I see it myself,

bless me! ha, ha, ha! capital! We'll have to ticket you, by Jove! like port and sherry. You'll cut in for a rubber, won't you? you're not afraid of being arrested as an impostor, eh?"

"Oh no!" I replied; "I would have no fears in such a hospitable house, even if I were one; but it is late, and I must be getting back to the camp. My trap has been here for some time;" for a servant had twice announced its arrival, and, on the second occasion, appeared to be struggling with a strong inclination to laugh, which I had no doubt was inspired by some vagaries on the part of Jack Leslie, whom it would be prudent to get off the premises as soon as possible.

"God bless me! what's that?" exclaimed Badger, as the tones of a key-bugle, sounding "the alarm," "the assembly," "the advance," and "the double," burst through the window in rapid succession.

“What can it be?” said every one.

I knew very well what it was. Jack was intensely practising the instrument in question at that time, and was used, when he went off for an afternoon’s “out,” as he called it, to take the bugle with him for undisturbed practice in solitary places. Now the graceless wretch, being impatient, was undoubtedly using it as a fulcrum for my removal from the festive scene.

“I know what it is,” I said; but after so many extraordinary things I daren’t tell the naked truth. “It’s my fellow; the scoundrel has got tipsy at the inn, no doubt, and he’s musically inclined, and constantly carries that key-bugle about with him, and he is making the noise, I am afraid; so I will get him away as quickly as I can. Good-night, Mrs Badger; good-night, Lady Rose; I hope I shall—I hope I shall have the—the—good-night;” and I dashed on to the staircase, followed by my host.

"Drunk, did you say?" he inquired.

"I'm afraid so," I replied.

"God bless me! I hope he hasn't been over my borders with his wheels."

"Oh no! he's pretty steady, even when he's much in liquor."

"Well, that is a thing I never could stand—a drunken groom. Take my advice and send him to the lock-up at once."

By this time we had reached the hall-door, and were saluted with a cry from the outer darkness,—

"Now then, stoopid, air you coming?"

This was too much for Mr Badger, and he bawled out,—

"Yes, we're coming, you scoundrel; and I've just been advising your master to send you to the lock-up."

"Lock up your jaw, old Calipash," responded Jack.

"Silence, John!" I thundered.

"Oh! you really ought to have him

locked up," implored Mr Badger. "James and William can run him down in a twinkling; say the word and it's done."

"Clear your throat, you old bloater!" cried Jack; and indeed the old gentleman was husky with excitement.

"Oh, this is monstrous!" cried Badger. "At all events, let me beseech you not to let him drive."

"Oh! that I won't," I said, springing on to the step.

"No man drives my mare but myself," said Jack, showing fight, and clutching the reins.

"We'll see about that," I said; and wresting the reins from him after a short tussle, I drove off at a canter.

"MIND THE ARAUCARIA!" This was the Badger's last good-night.

Jack was, as I expected, decidedly tipsy, and not a little savage at my usurpation of the ribbons.

"You're a nice fellow," he said, "to oblige—running off with a fellow's mare and trap like that."

"And you're a nice sort of fellow," I rejoined, "to come disgracing me, and yourself, and the regiment, at a stranger's house, with your blackguardly conduct."

"I'll shoot that old soap-boiling friend of yours," blustered Jack; "lock-up, forsooth!"

"It would have served you right if I had let his fellows trot you down there for the night."

"Yes; and I like your swaggering me—me, a commissioned ens— officer, I mean—as your private servant. Confounded cheek!"

"You'd better shut up, Mr Jack. I should certainly have been ashamed to pass you off as an officer in a regiment I belonged to."

Jack hereupon relapsed into heavy sulks, and, after a silent drive home, parted from me at my quarters without saying "Good-night."

CHAPTER V.

“ Not caring to observe the wind,
Or the new sea explore,
Snatched from myself, how far behind
Already I behold the shore.”

—WALLER.

THE evening, the events of which were detailed in the last chapter, had been a very exciting one; and as my ordinary life was quiet and uneventful, I was all the more affected by the strange incidents which it had presented. I was not sorry, therefore, that Jack took the unchristian line of parting with me in the sulks, for otherwise he would inevitably have favoured me with his society in my quarters, and I was anxious to be alone. Alone, however, I was not to be,

for on opening the door of my hut I saw with much irritation that the room had already an occupant.

Seated in front of the fire, with his abominable coarse ammunition-boots disposed one on either side of the chimney-piece, was my professional ally Blackstock.

A glass of whisky-punch dispensed its steamy aroma about the room, and the atmosphere was additionally clouded with the fumes of some very rank tobacco. The spectacle was not unusual; almost any night of the seven my room might have been seen under similar conditions; for I had taken Blackstock up and patronised him, in consideration of his professional attainments and the enthusiasm with which he shared my devotion to the minutiae of the service, in which respect I was otherwise without congenial society in the regiment. The spectacle was therefore by no means unusual, and would have been, on any previous night,

welcome ; but to-night everything seemed different.

On the instant I conceived a fierce loathing for Blackstock, tipple, tobacco, tactics, and all, and I could scarcely repress an exclamation of wrath and disgust when I saw him lolling familiarly in my arm-chair. Somehow scales seemed to fall from my eyes in the matter of Blackstock. He was getting too big for his boots ; and then his abominable tobacco and whisky—faugh ! it was insufferable. Poor Blackstock, unconscious of the sudden revulsion of feeling against him, threw his head familiarly back without moving from his seat, and observed,—

“Ulloa ! ’ere you are at last.”

I have already mentioned that he had been raised from the ranks, and I may add that he had not brought many “h’s” up with him from that sphere of usefulness.

"Yes," I said, grimly, taking off my overcoat, "here I am."

"A precious wait I've 'ad of it for you," he continued.

"What?" said I, more grimly.

He repeated the observation.

"I never asked you to wait, did I?" said I.

"No, but you'd 'ave been wild 'ad I gone to bed without showing you wot I've got here."

"I think I would have survived it," I said, chafing horribly.

"You don't seem keen about it," continued Blackstock.

"Very likely; I'm certain I don't feel keen—I'm sleepy;" and I began to light a candle.

The unconscious enthusiast began to unfold a sort of chart he had been making, and went on,—

"Your idea about skirmishers in Cocked 'At Wood won't wash at all."

"Won't it?" I growled between my teeth.

"No, it won't; I've done it out here geometrically. You see cavalry approaching Cocked 'At Wood from the left front would have an immense advantage; we mustn't forget that. Cocked 'At Wood is not a thing to be blinked, mind you. Once let your enemy lodge his skirmishers in Cocked 'At Wood——"

"Oh! confound Cocked Hat Wood!" I roared, incapable of further self-restraint.

I believe Blackstock turned pale. In his view it was much as if Job had followed the reckless advice of his wife. He looked up at me with horror in his eyes, and said solemnly,—

"'Ulloa, Bruce; I say, 'ave you been drinking?"

"Yes, of course I have; men generally do when they eat dinner, don't they?"

"Yes; but are you sure you're '*regular*'?"

"No, I'm sure of nothing but one thing, and that is that I'm going to bed."

"'Old 'ard, old feller, 'ere's something that will fetch you, I know. I put it in my pocket expressly to show you when I came over. It's very neat—there!—a new idea for the tongue of the havresack-buckle. What think you of that?" and he stood back like an artist when he lovingly surveys an art-gem of his own creation—and then, approaching the table, sat down to expatiate on its merits.

He looked so coarse and dirty, my temper fairly gave way, and I thundered out,—

"Take away your huckstering inventions out of my hut; I won't have them here. I tell you I'm sick of your everlasting pipe-clay!" and so saying, I dashed into my interior den and went to bed.

Poor Blackstock! how many a pang of remorse I have felt since for my brutal conduct. He looked stupefied. I heard him

sorrowfully buckling on the sword, without which he never left his quarters, and, as he retired from the hut, sadly murmuring to himself, "Wot a norrible example! Drunk and using disrespectful language of the army and its accoutrements! The senior captain, too. 'Orrid!"

I had wished to be alone that I might think. Well, now that I was alone, I found this no easy matter. I wished to review the whole events of that evening from the beginning—to live over again the drama in which I had certainly played no small part, and which, although it had been strange enough, yet seemed to have left my mind in a state of excitement rather difficult to account for even by its events.

I would begin my review methodically, I thought. I would begin with the dinner; and I figured to myself Mary Richmond sitting radiant with her sunny hair, and launching upon me those glances which were

meant for the infamous Burrige. Then rose the figure of her cousin—those divine eyes, that graceful little head, the harmonious undulations of her figure, her bright silvery laugh, her strange glance at me. Then Badger, bald, blatant, florid, and hearty—the exquisite contour of the neck, those tresses that might have tempted the wooing of every Zephyr that—hulloa! wandering; it was Badger I was at; yes, Badger, bald and blatant, with his immense white waistcoat, his cheery laugh, and those lips—ah! those lips, formed but to utter a music—tut, tut! this was nonsense. I couldn't think. I was feverish. I would compose myself; I would count eight hundred and go to sleep. I got up to the nineties. Ninety-five—ninety-six—ninety-seven—ninety-eight—ninety-nine—one hundred. One hundred years! in one hundred years it will be all the same. But will the waterfall be still working then?

Will the joss-house be—a hundred-and-one—two, three, four, &c. &c. &c.—eighteen. Ah! sweet eighteen! ah! that is the age, accompanied with those divine eyes, that aureole-like hair, and—nineteen, twenty—one, two, three—if I were with thee, how happy I'd be!—tweedledum, tweedle-dee! Pshaw! this was drivelling. I had lost command of my thoughts. I got out of bed, plunged my head in water, drank copiously of the same element, rolled back into bed again, and at last slept; but what slumbers! what dreams! Never for an instant could I get rid of the infernal joss-house. It was a temple of fame, on the top of which Mr Badger pirouetted on his head. Lady Rose and Miss Richmond leaned from a window on either side of it, sounding sweetly upon key-bugles “the alarm” and “the assembly;” while around it, hand-in-hand, the entire Stock Exchange of London uproariously hoofed in the May-pole dance. Sud-

denly it became a "lock-up," in which the vicar, loudly singing 'Spankadillo,' was incarcerated for debt, while on a light and lustrous cloud Lady Rose floated above, kindly applauding the imprisoned minstrel. Then I was sitting in it, now very much shrunk in its dimensions, and fitted as a second-class railway carriage. It was placed on a truck, which was dashing across the desert at a hundred miles an hour. As the truck violently oscillated, the joss-house was in perpetual danger of falling over. The seat on which I sat was too small for two, but Badger insisted on sharing it with me; and as one succeeded occasionally in shoving the other close to the edge, horrible cries of terror were raised by the sufferer. Then, suddenly, a sweet voice—oh! so soft and sweet—came in through the roof and said, "This must stop; this *must* and *shall* stop," and my troubled dreams were over.

One does not awake very fresh from slum-

bers of this sort, and when I awoke and heard the bugles sounding the warning for parade, parade appeared to me impossible—everything appeared impossible ; so I wrote a hasty note to the colonel for leave, and again threw myself down ; and there I lay all that day—at least all that forenoon—sometimes asleep, sometimes awake, but in either condition it was evident I was passing through some mental phase of which hitherto I had had no experience. Because I had been taken for another man under rather peculiar circumstances, was that a reason why I should become a sort of lunatic ? True, it was painful to have unwittingly become possessed of a lady's secret. I was very, very sorry for Lady Rose, and, with her high spirit and refined mind, that she should be placed in such a position was most distressing ; but, after all, though I seemed always to bestow my commiseration on her, it was Miss Richmond who was the real sufferer

by "that base unmanly Burridge;" and there, too, another thing—why on earth was I so bitter against this man? I had only had a faint glimpse of the situation—a one-sided view of the matter. Burridge might be innocent after all; Burridge might explain. Perhaps Miss Richmond was a vixen—hysterical people often are. Burridge might probably do the right thing in the end; and even if he didn't, he wasn't trifling with *my* affections. What reason had *I* for this furious animus against the man?

It was useless reasoning. On recurring to the idea of Burridge, he always took the shape of a base unmanly scoundrel, an infamous rascal, a detestable palterer, and so forth; and my heart swelled with the feeling that I could throttle him, when I thought upon the cruel injuries he had inflicted on Lady Rose; but then it was Miss Richmond he had injured—if, indeed, he had injured any one. Round and round in a circle thus

went my feverish thoughts, and my mind felt bruised and hammered like the ground on which the unceasing mill-horse batters his heavy hoofs.

The regimental dogs, who were all my fast friends, came one by one to look after me, and went away saddened and surprised, in that boots and shoes were hurled at them. Jack Leslie came to apologise and make it up, and was grimly told that "it didn't signify." Blackstock, meekly arriving under pretence of looking for the model tongue of the havresack-buckle, attempted to recover favour by reintroducing that subject. It surpassed his belief that sobriety should condemn what supposed inebriety had insulted—but so he found it. At last I sat up and soliloquised. "I see what it is, Donald Bruce, you're hipped—that's what you are; you've been bored by that stupid old 'Ran-ker,' with his chin-straps, and his knapsacks, and his 'true position' of the everlast-

ing soldier. Yes, you've been badly bored, dangerously bored, and the consequence is, that when you get a little excitement—like last night's adventure, for instance—it's too much for you. But this must stop; ha! this must and shall stop. What you want is change and amusement. So you get up and dress, have some luncheon, one large glass of sherry, or even two if you like, order your pony and take a ride. You're bound, by the by, in common civility, to make an apologetic and thanksgiving call on Mrs Badger; so up with you." I did as my spirit bade me, and began to feel better from that moment.

Having fulfilled the earlier part of the programme laid down by my counselling spirit, I mounted my well-bred little chestnut, "Captain Crosstree," and rode away in the direction of F——. After the feverish night I had passed, the fresh air and the bright sun, coupled with the exercise, were

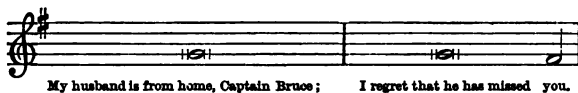
peculiarly grateful, and before long I began to feel restored to something like myself. "A queer fellow I must be!" thought I, as I rode along. "What could have been the matter with me? Perhaps there is a latent strain of insanity in our family, or perhaps Badger's turtle wasn't so fresh as——no, hang it!" and I was quite unreasonably angry with myself for this solution; and as it was apparent that if I began to think about it again I should have another relapse, I "concluded," as the Yankees say, not to think at all; and availing myself of a nice springy bit of turf on the roadside, I gave Captain Crosstree a breather till the outskirts of F—— were in sight. Here I was suddenly reminded of Mr Lewis, my host-that-should-have-been of the previous evening, and of the propriety of paying my devoirs at his residence in the first instance. Oddly enough, the very first of the series of villas proved to be his; there it was, "Carys-

fort Villa " emblazoned in large white letters on the gate-post ; and Jack and I must have passed it unnoticed the night before, because it stood exceptionally apart from the principal cluster, and it was only on reaching them that we began to think of looking for it. It was indeed a great contrast in its aspect to the florid magnificence of Mr Badger's abode.

Mr Lewis was from home, but I was shown into a small and dingy drawing-room, where I was received by his wife, whose whole air, manner, and aspect suggested the idea of a loss of colour ; she seemed to be washed out ; her eyes, her hair, her cheeks, her cap-ribbons, and her dress, all were faded ; and when she spoke, the flat and lugubrious tone of her voice revealed a spirit to which light and sunshine were strangers. She communicated her ideas in short sentences delivered in one unvarying key, and in the warily *staccato* manner of a parson reading

the Psalms, and afraid of being run into by the responses.

"My husband is from home, Captain Bruce; I regret that he has missed you." She intoned this, and, musically reported, she spoke on this wise:—



"I am very sorry indeed," I replied, "but will you kindly convey to him also the apology which I have to make to you for my non-appearance last night?"

"He knows, he understands the reason," she said; "it was laughable" (and she looked as dismal as a mute), "it was laughable; but perhaps you were a gainer by the mistake."

"On the contrary, my dear madam," I began——

"You were a gainer by the mistake," she

insisted, "in a certain sense. Our poor house is not to be compared to Mr Badger's in temporal things: we cannot entertain: we are not entitled to entertain: and we do not entertain."

I tried to get up a complimentary speech to the effect that if there *was* a residence whose entertainments the public were likely to approach with more than ordinary avidity, &c. &c., but I broke down, and she went on,—

"And therefore I say that you were a gainer. We should not have ventured to ask you: but our good friend Mr Rasper: spoke of you in a way: that emboldened us to do so: he seemed to think that you might relish: the change of a quiet evening: and we invited you: but as far as creature comforts are concerned: you were a gainer in Mr Badger's home." I certainly began to agree with her, but I loudly disclaimed the idea. She continued, "Mr Badger has him-

self called to-day : it was well meant, but he is a boisterous man : and, I fear, a worldling. He explained your absence : and invited us to his home : to dinner next Thursday : at seven o'clock. We have respectfully declined : it was well meant : we are bound to think charitably of our brothers : it was well meant, I dare to say : but we declined it : we are not given to mirth and revelry :” (her looks did her the grossest injustice if she was) “and Mr Badger’s home is spoken of : as a place : where cards : and wine : and dancing are permitted : therefore we respectfully declined.”

Here she paused a moment, and I could hardly refrain from responding



“Had you been with us last night,” she went on, “you would have met a precious

man : a Scotchman like yourself : Toozle M'Foozle, the missionary from Tongaloo. He told us sweet facts : his trumpet-tongue has been heard : there is an upheaving in the island. Whiki-Whacky, the king of the Bouples : has had his eyes opened. I regret that you missed him : it was a blessed refreshment."

"Ah ! it must have been, my dear madam," said I, hastily rising to take my leave, and blessing the accident that had spared me the trumpet utterances of the M'Foozle.

"Will you not rest a while ? the day is hot : will you drink some whey ?"

"Thank you very much, I have a most pressing engagement, and could only permit myself the pleasure of a flying call on this occasion ; another time I hope to be more fortunate ;" and I was off—"and if ever," thought I, "I enter this house again, may I be—whey indeed !"

Receiving Captain Crosstree from the

hands of a sad-looking gardener, I rode away in the direction of Mr Badger's house. There was no difficulty in recognising it; it towered above its neighbours, and in its *bizarre* construction impartially favoured every order of architecture. As I entered the gates (it was too great to have its name — the Hermitage — inscribed thereon), I looked out for the Araucaria, and was glad to see that it flourished intact; the track of Jack's erratic course on entering was, however, painfully legible in a neatly-defined arc cut in the well-shaven turf of the semi-circular lawn; and it was awfully evident that a Syrinx in stucco had very nearly been permanently relieved from the pursuit of her stucco persecutor.

Mr Badger had gone to London, the servant said, but the ladies were within; would I have my horse put up? Like master like man; this was hospitable; such was evidently the custom of Badger Hall. No, I

wouldn't have my horse put up, but I would go in and see the ladies; and in I went. I felt a little queer as I ascended the staircase; perhaps I felt the awkwardness of meeting Miss Richmond after the crisis of last evening—I don't know; at all events, I was spared that trial. When I entered the drawing-room Mrs Badger was there alone. The worthy lady received me most cordially.

"I seem," said I, "to have so many apologies to make, Mrs Badger, that I scarcely know where to begin."

"Apologies, Captain Bruce! Nothing of the sort—quite the contrary; if there is an apology to be made, it is my husband should make it for misleading you; but I assure you *we* all consider it a very fortunate blunder, and I hope you do too" (ha! I had made a favourable impression, then); "and you took it so nicely and easily, and made us all laugh so with your fun about the

'impostor,' and all that—my gracious! how we *did* laugh! Badger says he thinks he's broken a rib; I say he's too fat for that; but, anyhow, he's not laughed so much for an age, and that's saying a good deal; and he's wild to get you to come back and dine again and meet your 'double;' and you will, won't you, very soon?"

"I shall be only too happy, I assure you. Pray, how is Miss Richmond to-day?"

"Ah! poor Mary, she's had a sad night of it! that's the only unpleasant part of our party. She had another fit of hysterics, and didn't sleep all night; but she's sleeping now, and her uncle is to bring her something from town that I hope will do her good. It was the heat yesterday, I'm certain."

"No doubt," I said; "it was very thundery last night; I couldn't sleep myself; and I hope Lady Rose is not the worse of being out so late in the dew?"

“Oh ! Rose is perfectly well ; we were just going out to take the air in the grounds—and here she is to speak for herself.”

I experienced a temporary relapse into some of the sensations of last night as she entered : the blood ebbed suddenly from my heart, flashed into my temples, tingled in my feet, and throbbed in my hands. I rose, and, rising and looking at her as she advanced, there suddenly flitted across my mind the lines of Tennyson—

“To whom
Coming through heaven like a light that grows
Larger and clearer, with one mind the gods
Rise up for reverence.”

Then from amid these verses started out a fierce and crying conviction that my face was red, my voice thick and husky ; that my boots were a great deal too big for my feet, and my feet for the rest of my body ; that the sun had taken the skin off the bridge of my nose ; that I had cut myself shaving that morning ; that the uncicatrised wound

was to go bleeding copiously, and that, if it did, I had left my pocket-handkerchief at home;—all this flashed through my mind like something revealed by lightning as I advanced to meet her.

Her greeting was kind, unconscious, and calm—as, indeed, why should it be otherwise? and my mind speedily regained its composure, and I recognised, in detail, that, dressed in white with a white straw hat, garlanded with a wreath of wild-flowers and trimmed with violet ribbon, with which also her hair was confined, her beauty showed to still greater advantage than in the more elaborate toilet of the evening. I noted all this in a second or two.

“You are not afraid, then,” she said, with a smile, “to come back to the scene of your last night’s imposition? Perhaps you don’t know that my uncle is a magistrate—a very formidable person indeed?”

“I suppose,” said I, “I have the audacity of my craft.”

"And I hope you have not been very severe with your poor groom. I never could forgive you if you were. That climax of our mystification was really too delightful; but you missed the best of it — my uncle's righteous indignation. But at last he was mollified; we all laughed so, he was fairly compelled to join in the chorus, and he admitted that, if there was no damage done to the Araucaria, it was not such a bad joke after all."

"I am ashamed to recollect the fellow's conduct," I said; "I have not decided what to do with him yet;" and I tried to look as grim as if my intentions oscillated between the bastinado and the knout.

"Oh, aunt! intercede for him. Captain Bruce, you must forgive him — consider the amusement he afforded. Do, pray, let him off. Is he in the guard-room now?"

"N-n-n-no, not exactly; he's under sur-

veillance; but, since you throw yourself into the scale with Mercy against Justice, why, of course, Justice has no chance; the man must be forgiven," and I said this with an air of self-sacrifice.

"‘To err is human, to forgive divine,’" said Lady Rose; "and since you have behaved so well, you shall be rewarded. You shall go out with us into my uncle's wonderland and see the waterfall, after last night's disappointment."

"What?" broke in Mrs Badger, "did you not get to the fall after all? What ever were you about?"

Lady Rose and I exchanged glances, and somehow this little confidence was delightful to me.

"Oh!" I said, carelessly, "it was too dark last night to see all its mechanism."

"Well, I'm afraid you must put off seeing it till your next visit, for the gardeners are terribly busy to-day with some new mush-

room-beds, and I don't know who to get to pump it on."

"Oh! thanks; it will be something to look forward to another time."

"But let us go out and look about us, and take the air; it is a pity to lose such a lovely day. Come away, Rose."

We passed into the Badger fairy-land. There was the joss-house and the other grotesque things which had furnished my visions of the night. I felt half surprised to see them looking so tame and innocent. And there was the angle in the walk where Lady Rose had turned upon me with fierce denunciations. Was it possible that this was the same Lady Rose? with that quiet playful manner? those gentle eyes? that silvery voice? Was it possible that the Heré of last night, flashing scorn and splendid indignation, stood before me now, clothed, by some wondrous transfiguration, in the tender graces of Aphrodité? "Idal-

ian Aphrodité—beautiful! Fresh as the foam new-bathed in Paphian wells.” Oh exquisite loveliness! oh perfection of beauty, incomparable in either mood!

She saw that my eyes were fixed upon her, and, probably divining the tenor of my thoughts, said hurriedly and with a blush,—

“Oh, aunt! I must not forget—some flowers for Mary; let us go to the greenhouse. Are you fond of flowers, Captain Bruce?”

“I like everything that is beautiful, Lady Rose,” I replied.

“Ah! that is a Scotch answer,” she said; “you won’t commit yourself.”

“Now tell me,” I retorted, “how an Irishman would have answered.”

“Oh! that is another thing. I’m not bound to criminate myself.”

“Ah, ha! there is one to mark for me,” I cried.

“How?”

"Why, you're not an Irishman."

"Then we're equal," she laughed, "and may start fair again."

"Well, Lady Rose, I will throw off my national caution, and admit that I am intensely fond of flowers, but I'm so dreadfully ignorant of the science that belongs to them, even of their names, that I am shy of alluding to my passion."

"If the passion was a true one, would you not learn the names of your charmers?"

"Yes; but when one only gets a fleeting glimpse of the adored object from time to time, how is an intimacy to be arrived at?"

"Are there no flowers at the camp?"

"Lady Rose, have you ever seen it?"

"Oh! I forgot; you said it was exactly like the Sahara," she replied, very demurely.

"So it is, and there are not many flowers there, you know; but," and I changed the subject hurriedly—"but tell me the names of your special favourites."

“Oh! the time would fail me; for I am very catholic in my tastes, and have so many special favourites that they can hardly be called special. Now help me” (as we entered the greenhouse) “to select a bouquet for my cousin;” and we set to work, discussing and selecting, I cutting the flowers decided on.

Mrs Badger very soon got bored, and went away on the pretext of keeping Miss Richmond company, and we were alone. A week ago, could I have penetrated the future, and seen myself—a bird, timid, *farouche*, and shy, as far as the fair sex were concerned—could I have seen myself, I say, thus caught and tamed not unwilling, cheerily hopping from spray to spray, and twittering back unabashed the bright sallies and ringing mirth of a beautiful young lady, how would I have stared with astonishment! But, after all, what a lot of things there are that would make us stare if we could only

see them ; and what saith the Persian bard with a hard name, which I decline to spell, "The bee, the serpent, and the bird, are they not quelled on a sudden by the glamour of their charmers ? then why not mortal man, whose breath is in his nostrils ?" Certainly, why not ? also Amen.

"You have spoken to your cousin, Lady Rose ?" I asked, suddenly.

"On several occasions," she replied, archly.

"Yes ; but I mean—but I mean——"

"Oh yes, I have spoken to her about what you mean—that is, as much as I could venture at the time. You are quite exculpated ; pray do not be uneasy."

"Oh ! I wasn't thinking of that ; but I mean—I mean—it is very sad—I am infinitely distressed—this Captain Burridge—I mean——"

"I know exactly what you mean ; you want a flower for your button-hole, and you shall have it ; here, this red geranium will

be most appropriate," and she gave it me with a sort of wicked smile.

My little attempt to get up a confidence (why should I be so anxious for a confidence?) had broken down; but why couldn't I say something neat and telling in acknowledgment of the flower? I couldn't, at all events. I received it clumsily, said "I——" stopped, placed it in my button-hole, coughed, said "I——" again (confound it! where were my ideas?), and had the satisfaction of seeing her fall into a paroxysm of laughter.

"Oh! Captain Bruce," she sobbed, "forgive me—forgive me; the Scotch are a most respectable nation, but——" and she was off again.

Hang it! I didn't like this; I would sulk a little: I did so. She was full of penitence at once.

"Forgive me; I don't know why I should laugh so. It was something about——"

but she couldn't finish her sentence, and after another recovery said,—

“Come and have some tea, and scold me all the way—I deserve it.” Who could resist this?

I hate being laughed at—who doesn't? If Tom Smith laughs at me, I punch his head, morally or physically, as may seem most expedient; but if “Idalian Aphrodité—beautiful” does so, and apologises, why—well, well.

When we got back to the house Mr Badger had arrived, and afternoon tea was discussed to the loud symphony of that boisterous worldling's laughter.

Badger rather jarred on me to-day, but I took good care he shouldn't know it. Indeed I felt that I was solicitous for Badger's good opinion. We compared notes as to our respective interviews with Mrs Lewis, over whom he nearly fractured another rib.

At last I begged to have Captain Crosstree ordered, and he was brought round.

"Oh, what a lovely pony!" cried Lady Rose, looking at him from the window. "What is his name?"

"'Captain Crosstree is his name,'" quoted I, from the popular song of that drama whose popularity lately became a little too tiresome and monotonous.

"I *must* go down and speak to him;" and she went, bearing biscuits for the fortunate animal.

Badger and I followed. Badger had taken a fancy to me (why not?), asked me to "name a day" or to "come any day and take pot-luck." "It's a pleasure," he explained, "after a hard day in the City, to have a talk and a laugh, and send one's worries to the devil;" and I readily consented to assist at the desired elimination. When we reached the hall-door, impulsive Lady Rose was fondling and caress-

ing "the Captain," feeding him with biscuits, and kissing the white star on his forehead.

"I have quite fallen in love with Captain Crosstree," she cried.

I nearly had a fit of apoplexy in trying to recall an appropriate quotation from the prevailing drama, but again I failed. Dolt!

"And he shall have a nosegay too," she said, patting him on the neck, and plucking from the wall two sprigs of jessamine, with which she decorated the head-band of the glorified quadruped.

"When Captain Crosstree wakes to-morrow," I cried, "he will say with the Athenian weaver, after Titania's caressing touch had been laid upon him, 'I have had a dream—a dream—past the wit of man to say what a dream I have had;'" and having said this, I felt that I had not lived that day quite in vain, and rode off ecstatic.

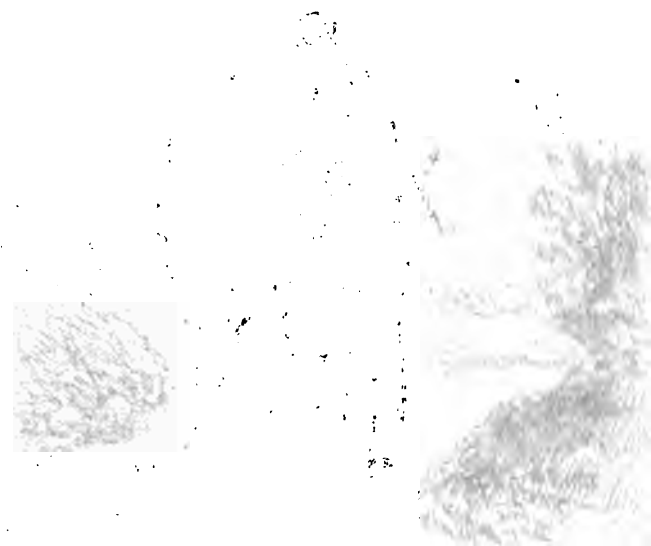
I trotted rapidly through the outskirts



"A theft"

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of the village, never for an instant taking my eyes from the jessamine sprigs which bobbed in front of me ; but when the last villa was invisible, and I was myself under the friendly shade of wayside trees, I pulled up, and dismounting, basely despoiled "the Captain" of his ornaments. I put them in my hat-band for safe keeping, apologised to the pony for the theft by patting him on the neck and fondling his nose, and then casting a nervous glance up and down the road, I hastily imprinted a guilty kiss on his white star, and remounting, galloped off covered with shame and confusion of face. It was a heavenly afternoon ; rain had lightly fallen in the early morning, but the sky had been serenely blue ever since, and the sun was drawing forth new freshness on wood and meadow, as yet unjaded by the summer heat. The hay-harvest was nearly finished, and the air was enriched with its fragrance, rich with the blended

perfumes of a myriad wild-flowers that "ran riot, garlanding" hedgerow and bank, draping all that was unsightly and commonplace—prosaic paling and decrepit wall—with the transfiguring mantle of their glorious bloom and their exuberant youth. Even the stolid Hants labourers dimly recognised the fitness of things by decorating hat and sun-bonnet with the flowers and blossoms which nature seemed to thrust upon them; even they, touched by an unconscious inspiration, lifted up their voices and sang. Mellowed by distance, their strains came pleasantly from far-away meadows, blending in the woods around me with the full-toned chorus of the birds, and with the humming of a brook that went glimmering through the sylvan arcades and vistas. Glimpses of lucid cloud, gleams of liquid blue, rays and flashes of mingled green and gold, shot through the young foliage of the boughs that here and there quite over-canopied the

road. Life, light, beauty, fragrance, music, joy! Nature was in an ecstasy herself, and calling ecstatic on the heart of man to rejoice with her and to be glad. I accepted her summons: I sang—I shouted; whereupon consentaneous Captain Crosstree took the bit between his teeth and ran off with me, *nolens volens*, for a good two miles, and only stopped in deference to a long hill which restored to me the mastery. I then threw the reins upon the pony's neck, and as we sauntered up the long ascent, I grappled with myself—that is, two spirits, a questioning and an answering spirit, undertook to carry on within me an investigation, and when we had reached the summit a solution had been arrived at.

“Am not I,” began the inquiring spirit who represented myself — “Am not I, Donald Bruce, now turning thirty years of age?”

“You are, indeed,” was the reply.

"Have not my sisters stuck flowers in my pony's head any time these fifteen years?"

"They have."

"Did I ever take them out and stick them in my hat-band?"

"Never."

"Did I ever kiss Captain Crosstree's white star before?"

"Certainly not."

"I have often ridden on this road before, I think?"

"Dozens of times."

"On summer evenings when the sun was as bright, the sky as blue, and the trees as green, the perfume of the woods and the meadows as fragrant, the song of the birds and the haymakers as sweet?"

"Of course—of course."

"Was I ever affected by these things as I am now?"

"No, you never made such an ass of yourself in all your life before."

"I was sober last night, I think?"

"As a judge."

"Yet my mind was in a frenzy?"

"Absurdly so."

"I invariably sleep well?"

"Heavily."

"But last night I lay awake till dawn?"

"You lay awake till the bugle went for recruits' drill."

"Is it conceivable that, twenty - four hours ago, I should have recognised a musical combination of letters in the word 'Badger'?"

"It is quite inconceivable."

"Yet to-day I do?"

"To-day the word Badger is by no means uneuphonious to you."

"Was I ever conscious of having large boots and clumsy feet on a previous occasion?"

"You were always confoundedly proud of them."

"I have no organic heart-complaint, I think?"

"You are as sound as a prize-fighter."

"Yet my heart palpitated as I went upstairs this afternoon?"

"True it did, furiously."

"Why?"

"Because you are ill of a strange disorder."

"What produced it?"

"Look into the hedgerow there beside you."

"Why?"

"Because you can read an answer there."

"What is there?"

"A flower."

"Oh! I see—a rose—a rose;" and as I plucked it a sweet and already well-nigh revealed apocalypse flashed full upon me. "I love her—I adore her—I worship her. I have seen her but twice; this, then, is love at first sight, disbelieved in by the many,

contemned by the most. What matters it? I love her—I adore her. Had it been but one fleeting glimpse, I should have loved her for ever: and have I not spoken to her?—have I not listened to the ineffable music of her voice, and received into my inmost soul the heavenly scintillations of her angel-eyes? Am I transformed by some magic spell—seeing with new eyes and hearing with new ears? Was I alive till yesterday? Did the sun ever shine before? Or is this a new heaven and a new earth—a wonder-land of beauty and brightness and song, from which the stroke of a magician’s wand shall cast me back again into outer darkness? No, no; this is the same world of yesterday, but I read it by the light of a new revelation. It is Rose’s world—and I love her—I adore her!”

I turned and looked back. I saw the deep groves in which F—— lay embosomed. Her beautiful image seemed to stand out

from the background of their dark masses.
I scattered the leaves of the divining flower
to the breeze that blew towards her, mur-
muring, with an unconscious alteration, the
sweet words of Waller—

“Go, lovely Rose !
Tell her that shares thy name with thee
That now she knows,
When I compare her unto thee,
How sweet and fair she seems to be.”

Then I turned and rode away.

CHAPTER VI.

“ The banquet, where the meats became
As wormwood, and he hated all who pledged.”

—TENNYSON.

It was late when I reached the camp—that is, from a mess-going point of view ; and as I entered my hut the last bugle for that festive meal was sounding—that tocsin of the soul to how many worthy fellows who carry their souls in that part of the body where the Dutch theorist placed the living and thinking principle of all mankind. To-night it was for me no tocsin of the soul. Eat dinner to-night !—impossible. The thought was almost nauseating. I would go to mess, though. Delightful as my thoughts were, I would go to mess that I might enjoy them

the more by contrast afterwards. Having dressed with all speed, I tenderly placed the jessamine sprigs in water, and finding no button-hole in my open red jacket wherein to bestow the geranium, I cut a place for it, inserted my treasure, and, thus decorated, repaired to the mess-room.

Dinner was pretty well advanced when I entered ; but instantly there was a lull in the conversation, and certain indications in the faces of the less sophisticated told me at once that I had myself been the immediate subject of conversation.

" Ah ! here you are, Bruce," said the senior Major. " We were just saying, ' what has become of our model of punctuality ? ' I hope " (with a grin) " you're better ? "

" Better, Major ! " said I, sitting down ; " what do you mean ? "

" I mean what I say. I heard you were ill this morning."

" I never was ill in my life."

"Well, Leslie there told us you were ill."

There was a general titter round the table. I saw how it was. Master Jack, having himself been "*ebrius Baccho*," had been making an amusing story about me, and transferring to me (with the common weakness of the overtaken) his own transgressions. At another time I would have laughed, but not so to-night. I fixed Jack with a stern eye.

"You said I was ill, Leslie, did you? Why?"

Poor Jack looked very red and unhappy, and said, "Well, you know you were very queer last night."

"What do you mean by *queer*, sir?" I inquired, in a dangerous voice.

"Why, Donald, don't snap my nose off. You know you were uncommonly crusty last night, and that's peculiar with you, you know; for no one ever saw you out of temper before"—(the truckler). "And then

when I went to your hut after parade this forenoon you were still in bed, and that's peculiar with you, you know; and then when old 'Pilot,' the Major's dog, came quietly in to say 'good-morning,' you threw a candlestick at the old beggar, and that's peculiar with you; and then you swore at me when I said 'shame,' and that's—well, that's not common with you; so when I went away I said, and I never doubted, 'This poor, dear Donald is ill, you know,' and I told the Major and—and others, you know."

A great shout of laughter rang down the table, giving fresh revelations of Jack's antecedent narrative. I joined in it, but grudgingly; for I felt that I did not like these liberties. There was a coarseness about them I had not noticed on previous occasions. There was a coarseness about the whole thing to-night. The Major's whiskers, I noticed, looked exceptionally coarse, the

thumbs of the mess-waiters grasping the dishes they offered were eminently unsatisfactory, and the doctor's method of feeding himself simply revolting. The conversation, too, sounded so stale. Who the dickens, who cared to know, did *not* know that the odds against Bucephalus had gone from sevens to eights? and yet Brittles and Tomkinson repeated the statement six times each before the joints had been disposed of, reiterating on each several occasion, "By Jupiter Jingo! I wouldn't be in Lord Welshe's shoes;" and why discuss Miss Furtado's eyes and other features for ten solid minutes? We all know she is a charming actress, and has beautiful physical as well as dramatic traits, but why go on with her eternally? Why not talk of the Colleen Bawn, or Patti, or Miss Herbert, or Miss Oliver, or Miss Nelly Moore, or Marie Wilton, or some one else of at least equal distinction? Why hammer, hammer on one eternal topic?

Damme ! it was insufferable to-night. And that old ass M'Snorter, our Highland Major, whose only ideas were heather, haggis, and hollow squares—why should *he* say, in contradiction to me, that the late Duke of —— did not regret his great purchases in the north, when I knew to a certainty—I may almost say from himself—that he *did*? It was most irritating. And Snoaker, too, what did *he* know about politics? The shape of a cue, or a ballet-girl's ankle, were subjects on which he was entitled to a respectful hearing; but as to whether the franchise is a right or a trust—pshaw! what business had he to grapple with *me* on a subject of that sort?

Altogether mess seemed different to-night, and the coarseness, the wearisomeness, the flatness, the baldness, the ignorance, the iterativeness displayed in the conversation, had never presented itself to me before; and yet Snoaker, Brittles, Tomkinson, M'Snorter, *et*

hoc genus omne, were they not to-night in possession of the same intellectual brilliancy which had illustrated them for the last decade? Revolving these thoughts, I sat at meat with a scourge-like expression of countenance.

"Donald Bruce has become a swell!" cried a voice from one end of the table.

"As how?" I inquired, full of watchful irritation.

"Who ever saw you with a bouquet" (the beast pronounced it "bucket") "at mess before?"

"Yes," said the Major, "I've been looking at that."

"Have you?" I sneered. "I thought your botanical interests were confined to the thistle."

I said this with so much "*intention*" that there was a general look of surprise, for I was commonly a placable and easy-going mortal.

"When Scot meets Scot," muttered a neighbour.

Now, if there is one association of men in which more than any other a sulky fellow or a man out of temper is unmercifully dealt with, that association is a regimental mess. There is no quarter to be found there for splenetic moods. Good-humour and blithe freedom of speech pervade the atmosphere; and he who violates the one or resents the other brings an old house about his ears; and so I did. Chaff of all sorts, light and heavy, played upon me like a hail-storm.

"The mess-president" (I then occupied that post), cried one, "has been settling with the green-grocer and getting discount."

"Is it to be a standing perquisite, Bruce?"

"Yes; can we hope for this splendour every night?"

"Or is it only a sample from a new tenderer?"

"I'd be hanged if I'd take it out in mere geraniums."

"Leave a canny Scot to make his own bargain; to-morrow night we shall have a camellia."

"Hadn't we better ask the General to dine some night when we can be sure of the camellia?"

"Seriously, Bruce, where did you get it?"

"Don't ask him; he's looking savage. To-morrow beer will have risen a halfpenny a glass."

"As to thistles," said the Major, who had all this time been excogitating a sarcasm in his turbid soul—"as to thistles—why, as to thistles, it strikes me, Captain Bruce—it strikes me that the less *you* say on that subject the better;" and he delivered his artless "*tu quoque*" with a look of triumphant indignation, as who should say, "*Habet.*"

The Major's delightful imbecility evoked no small mirth, and when it subsided, the

professed lady's-man of the regiment remarked, "You lost a golden opportunity there, Major, of annihilating Bruce with even more brilliancy!"

"What do you mean?" growled the Celt.

"Don't you know the language of flowers?"

"Language of flowers! I should think not. Stuff! why?"

"Because, you know, the geranium, if given by a lady to a fellow (which in Bruce's case is, of course, absurd), conveys much the same idea as he wished to express about you when he spoke of the thistles."

I pricked up my ears.

"I don't understand you," said the Major.

"Why," said the lady's-man, "every flower, you know, has a meaning; if a lady gives you a myrtle, for instance, that expresses 'I love you constantly;' or a rose, that says 'I love you to distraction;' but if she gives you a geranium——"

I looked at him with a hungry intensity.

"Don't look so fierce, Bruce ; you quite frighten me."

"No, no," I said, with a forced laugh ; "go on—let us hear the nonsense. What does the geranium say ?"

"Well, the geranium says—not I, mind—the geranium says, like Dr Johnson, 'Sir, you are an ass !'"

A pang shot through my heart, but with a desperate effort I controlled myself, and said, "And pray where did you learn all this ?"

"Learn it, my dear fellow ? read it in the book, of course."

"What book ?"

"'The Language of Flowers,' to be sure."

"You don't mean to say that nonsense of that sort is published ?"

"It isn't nonsense ; but 'The Language of Flowers' is published, and a very nice useful little book I find it, I can tell you."

"I should rather like to see the rubbish," I said, carelessly.

"Oh, I'll show it you any time!"

And I resolved that he should have a very early opportunity of doing so. The conversation now dribbled into our common domestic channels.

M'Guffigy of the band had burst a blood-vessel in blowing that tremendous brazen serpenteleide; steel scabbards were certainly going to be introduced for infantry at last: at last! high time too: what an unutterable mull the Colonel made of that new deployment yesterday (*N.B.—Le Colonel, comme les absens, a toujours tort*): there was to be a fortnight's leave for grouse-shooting on "the twelfth," and no "Returns" for the grouzers: that was the Brigadier's doing: what a brick he was! but then he was a Guardsman, and Guardsmen's ideas on the subjects of leave were thoroughly sound and practical.

"Tommy Hawk wasn't really going to trot his grey cob, 'The Scalper,' against old Feedle M'Doo's 'Ringtailed Screamer'?"

"Yes, he was."

"Then the 'Screamer' must be handicapped?"

"No, he mustn't."

"Yes, he must—heavily."

"Time would show."

"Some people think themselves so confoundedly knowing."

"How well Tommy Hawk shot in the big match at Ashburnham!"

"Nearly won it."

"Would have won it if he hadn't drunk eleven brandies-and-sodas the night before."

"Nonsense!"

"Fact."

"Awful fellow to drink, Hawk!"

"Deuced clear-headed fellow, though!"

"Oh, deuced! and his billiards—something like, eh?"

"A fellow had arrived that day would see them all at billiards."

"Who?"

"Burridge of the —— Dragoon Guards."

(Burridge of the —— Dragoon Guards! my heart gave a thump at this intelligence.)

"Oh! had they come in?"

"Yes, the last squadron came in that morning."

"Burridge would see them all at billiards."

"Give any man ten."

"What! even Brittles?"

"Yes, even Brittles."

"Then he must be a nailer?"

And so on *ad nauseam*.

At last mess broke up; how insufferably wearisome it had been! and what difficulty I had felt in concealing my irritation, my *ennui*, my disgust!

"A rubber to-night, Bruce?" asked the Major, as I was leaving the mess-hut.

A rubber to - night! in the anteroom, where also there was a piano, and where that noisy Snorkins would reproduce for two hours the stale buffooneries of the music-halls. A rubber to-night! with such an *entourage*!—that Major was becoming too insufferable.

Arrived in my own hut, my first care was to look after the health of my jessamine. I experienced a shock. The “soldier-servant” is, in many respects, a useful institution; sometimes sober, frequently honest, very generally industrious, and always willing; but his ways are not as other men’s ways, nor his thoughts (when he has any) as other men’s.

My leal and trusty retainer observing, no doubt with surprise, the sudden indication of a floral taste in the glass on my dressing-table, had evidently thought to gratify me by enriching the, in his eyes, rather meagre collection; and gathering from the little

garden which is now a common adjunct to the soldiers' huts at the camp, a bunch of gaudy and graveolent flowers, had crammed them in beside the adorable sprigs of jessamine.

Had the fellow been present at the moment, I believe something approaching homicide would have been done on his person : as it was, I snatched his offering from the sacred shrine which it profaned, was trampling under foot the contaminating vegetables with horrible imprecations, when a deep voice remarked, "'Ave you smorged him ? A beetle—was it ?"

By all the thunders ! Blackstock again ! His shaggy head was thrust familiarly through the window, and, accepting him as a ram caught in the thicket, I swooped upon him accordingly.

"What do you mean by prying into my private room, *Mister* Blackstock ?" I inquired, indignantly.

"No hoffence, hold fellow," said the astonished Blackstock, who had done so unrebuked fifty times—"no hoffence; I was just passing round the 'uts, and saw a light in yours, and looked in to see that hall was right."

"Well, all is right; are you satisfied?"

"Ho! certainly."

"Good-night, then."

"Wy, Bruce, wot's come to you?"

"An unwelcome visitor," I snarled.

"'Ow'av I got your back up, my dear boy?"

"You needn't 'dear boy' me, Mr Blackstock; and now, if it is quite convenient, perhaps you will bring this intrusion to a close."

"Ho! hintrusion is it? ho! to be sure—I forgot; I should 'ave remembered my horigin: I won't forget again, I promise you;" and, surprised and indignant, the Quartermaster flounced away from the window. Immediately I felt that I was a ruffian and a snob, and rushed out to call

him back and apologise ; but the worthy fellow was too much offended, and marched away into the darkness, tossing his head like an infuriated drum-major. I would make it all right with him to-morrow, I thought, and, calmed with my thunderstorm, proceeded to replace the water in the flower-glass which had been contaminated by my servant's contribution.

This had been a tumultuous day following a tumultuous night ; I seemed to be cut off by centuries from the life of a week ago. Objects of the highest interest then were distasteful now, and things then indifferent had become revolting. I had heard of love at first sight ; I had heard of it only as a more violent development of an imbecility which could never personally affect me. If I had speculated on it at all, it had been in a scoffing and sceptical spirit ; and now——well, now faith came, because the existence of such a phenomenon was proved to de-

monstration in myself. Was I ashamed of it? No; I accepted it as a devotee accepts a mystery—inexplicable, unfathomable, but, above all things, true. I had never been similarly affected, but was that strange? No; I was fastidious, perhaps, and insensible, and it required the most powerful of magnets to draw forth the latent capabilities of my nature. But then had I not been subjected to such an influence? Oh yes! who could resist her?—this creature, so mysteriously attractive—so clothed in harmony and grace? Then came an unpleasant gleam of recollection about the geranium, and I looked doubtfully at the flower, but only for a moment. Pshaw! what trumpery nonsense!—the babbling of that ass Peterson at mess; was I to be affected by that? The language of flowers!—childish rubbish. What did Lady Rose know about it? Hem! ha!—well, suppose she did—what then? She was infinitely playful and sportive; it

was but a genial little sally, and she was too well bred to have made the innuendo unless she had felt the irony of it. In that point of view it was complimentary ; very much so indeed. So I promoted the geranium to a place beside the jessamine, and went to bed in content.

The next two days were passed, one in a long field-day, the other in a tedious court-martial, during which the preoccupation of my thoughts sadly interfered with the efficient discharge of my duties. It was not till the afternoon of the second day that I could make my escape from the camp, and then, need I say that I turned Captain Cross-tree's head in the direction of F—— ? The jessamine and geranium both looked rather fading and thirsty, so I took them out for an airing in my button-hole. I would go, I thought, and drop in, according to Badger's invitation, at the Hermitage. I *would* go, I was entitled to go, I must go. It was but civil

to inquire after Miss Richmond's health, and I hadn't been there for ever so long—why, not for forty-eight hours at least! Badger would be hurt if I didn't go; and I would go. So on I rode, and I rode on, passing rapidly through the scenes of my mental conflict, through the revealing woods and meadows, and down the unforgotten hill, seeing with a thrill the first glimpse of the dark woods of F——, which were for me an oasis indeed. When I came to Mr Lewis's house, I began to experience new sensations—fear, shame, shyness, a lumpiness about the throat, a faintness about the heart, an indescribable impulse to turn back and go campwards at the top of Crosstree's speed. I overcame it. "Courage!" I said to myself, "the visit is perfectly in form; I am going to visit Badger." I repeated the last words several times, and went on. Ha! there was the *Araucaria*. "I am going to visit Badger." There was Pan. "I am

going to visit Badger." Oh! what was that? "I am going to visit——;" but I wasn't; for a moment after I found myself sweeping past the Hermitage at a sharp canter, my face burning, my eyes fixed on Captain Crosstree's ears; and not till F—— lay a good half-mile behind did I draw rein.

POLTROON! IMBECILE! IDIOT! how I abused, how I despised myself: I a lover! of a worthy type, indeed. I, a great hairy soldier, to blush and tremble and run away like a thief from the house where of all others I wished to be. I would go back; but then, perhaps, I had been seen passing, and, indeed, I had had a vague tail-of-the-eye impression of white dresses on the lawn. What then? I *must* go back some time; there was no other road. I couldn't spend the rest of my life half a mile on the wrong side of F——; and did I always mean to fly from Rose like this? No, of course not; but why hurry? where *was* the call for

hurry? I would saunter on a while and enjoy the delightful air, and then go back. So I did saunter on, and did at last prevail upon myself to turn back. I turned just before coming to a sharp angle in the road, and had hardly done so when I heard the sound of horses' feet briskly cantering behind me. The horse was apparently pulled up short on getting to the head of the road. I myself pulled up, almost involuntarily, to see who was behind me, and the next moment found myself confronted by Miss Mary Richmond.

It was profoundly unpleasant, but there was no escape for either, unless the young lady took her horse over a stiff "post-and-rail" on the left, or I mine over an eight-foot fence on the right.

I felt almost overwhelmed with the awkwardness of the meeting, but did my best to take my hat off with an air of unconcern, feeling far more for her than for myself.

Woman-like, however, she showed herself much more equal to the situation than I did. She bowed gravely but politely, and I drew my horse aside to let her pass. Instead of doing so, however, she reined up beside me, and said,—

“I have wished to see you, Captain Bruce, as I have to apologise for having twice placed you in an awkward position. How annoyed I have felt at having made such a scene the other night, you will, I am sure, easily understand; but I hope you will also make allowance for the very painful position I was placed in on discovering the mistake I had made that fatal night at the opera, when—though I can hardly expect you to believe what sounds like an impossibility—your wonderful likeness, at a little distance, to a gentleman with whom—who is—that is to say—he is an intimate friend; and then the note I wrote you——”

“Pray make your mind easy about that,





An Explanation.

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Miss Richmond," I said; "it is paying your handwriting a poor compliment—but the light was bad too; anyhow, your note was unintelligible; and being much engrossed in the music (for I am music-mad), and feeling sure it was a mistake, I am afraid I was ungallant enough not to take much interest in it, and tore it up mechanically, while listening to that divine air Patti was singing at the time, without understanding a word of it."

Not strictly true, perhaps; but if the end can, in any case, justify the means, this falsehood was justified.

She looked at me sharply for a moment, then smiled kindly, and said,—

"I understand; thank you. Now, suppose we trot on, we shall be just in time for tea; you'll come and have some, won't you?"

I could not refuse such a pretext and such an opportunity, so we trotted on amicably together.

On reaching the Hermitage, we found Badger in the act of arriving from his daily visit to town. His wife and Lady Rose were on the lawn receiving him, and I was in the middle of the group before I had time to become frightened.

"Which of you is it?" roared Badger, who loved and appreciated his own joke.

"The Impostor," I replied, and Badger's ribs were imperilled.

"Well, come away in; send your pony to the stable. Now I've got you, I'll keep you. You must stay and take pot-luck with us."

I muttered something about my dress.

"Oh, dress be hanged! if it wasn't for that cat Polly and her finery I would dine in my dressing-gown and slippers."

"I shouldn't wonder if you went farther, uncle, and dined without them."

"I wish I could. If I was quite alone I would dine in nothing but my spectacles."

"How is Captain Crosstree to-day?" said Lady Rose, again honouring this singularly favoured animal with her notice and her caresses.

"Captain Crosstree has become insufferably conceited since you adorned him the other day," I replied.

"Ah, poor fellow! he shall have a new bouquet to-night. You have no flowers to give him at the camp, or they must be dusty sickly flowers if these are specimens you have in your button-hole, Captain Bruce; how *can* you wear such melancholy-looking objects?"

Crosstree's stolen jessamine sprigs and the doubtful geranium! I had forgotten all about them. Would that the Badgerian lawn might open and overwhelm them and me in everlasting oblivion!

"Ah! these are some—these are some flowers——"

"*Were*, I should say," replied Lady Rose.

"Yes, they are a little withered; but I can't afford to part with them just now—not till they are replaced," said I, making a wonderful rally.

"Oh, you're begging! Well, I see something suitable in the middle of that plot, but no one dares tread that sacred ground but my uncle. His foot is so light and fairy-like, you see, it leaves no mark. Uncle, dear! please fetch that heavenly peony, and give it to Captain Bruce."

Uncle Badger brought the thing (it was as big as a Portugal onion), and I was obliged ruefully to deck myself withal, affecting gratitude, which Lady Rose demurely accepted.

"You didn't have a very long ride, Captain Bruce?" she said.

"N-no, not very."

"Do you always ride as you did to-day? You can't pick up many impressions of the scenery."

“Ah! you saw me, did you?—the fact is there was a court-martial to-day, and——”

“Oh! and you sentenced the man to be hanged, and are a prey to horrible remorse, and were riding with fixed eyes, like Macbeth seeing the ghost: do you see him now?”

“No; how could I *here*? but the court-martial was very long and tiresome, and the room very hot, and after it was over one felt the necessity of fresh air and rapid motion.”

“My aunt and I were standing at the door as you passed, and we were quite frightened; you looked exactly as if you were going for a doctor: there was no one really much hurt, was there?”

“I beg your pardon, I don’t quite understand—where?”

“How should I know?” and she flitted away into the house—playful, teasing, but inexpressibly an angel!

I believe Badger's dinner was excellent; he was in high spirits, and uncorked freely both his wine and his jokes—the age of the former atoning in some sort for that of the latter. He was in high spirits; a new listener—what a boon to a talkative man with a limited *repertoire*! What a boon I was to Badger! And as for myself, I was well pleased to sit and listen dreamily to his babblement, while my spirit was far away in a delightful dreamland. We did not go into the garden after dinner, we went into the drawing-room, and there found the three ladies. Miss Richmond certainly looked not exactly sad, but her whole style suggested the idea of a creature who *ought* to be all sparkle and sunshine, and she certainly was not *that*; she looked wearied, *ennuyée*, springless; and it was only now and then, in reply to the rallyings of her uncle, that she flashed out into what were evidently her real characteristics. Poor







Mary ! she was a beautiful creature, and the suggestion of a secret sorrow increased the interest of her appearance.

“Rose, dear,” she said, after tea, “Captain Bruce is music-mad, and so am I ; do, pray, soothe our dark spirits with some of your wonderful songs.”

“Oh ! pray do, Lady Rose,” I seconded.

“I shall be charmed,” she replied, “but in what mood am I to encounter your dark spirits ? Grave or gay ? ”

“Oh ! a little of everything, from grave to gay, from lively to severe.”

“Grave for Polly, gay for myself, lively for my uncle, and severe for the gentleman who has spent the day in condemning his fellow-creatures to all sorts of pains and penalties.” She seemed to remember little things about me ; I liked that.

For the next hour I was in Elysium. What a voice she had ! a beautiful soprano, in which she poured forth a selection, indeed

such as we had named ; now a gem from Verdi or Rossini, now a gay Neapolitan, now a wild Andalusian air ; but I preferred her in those songs from which real genius and true feeling can draw such "heart's-own-country-music," the wild, the pathetic songs of her fatherland.

I was in the seventh heaven.

CHAPTER VII.

“One face, one voice, one habit, and two persons,
A natural perspective that is, and is not.”

—*The Twelfth Night.*

“A BOARD will assemble in the South Cavalry Barracks to-morrow forenoon at eleven o’clock, for the purpose of examining and reporting upon the condition of a hay-rack in G stable there.

President.

CAPTAIN BURRIDGE, Dr. Gds.

Members.

CAPTAIN BRUCE, — Fusiliers.

LIEUT. ROPER, the Royal Welshers.”

This was the announcement which I read in my order-book lying open on my table when

I got home that evening. At last, then, I was to meet this man ; at last I was to speak to him, a man whom, years ago, I had regarded merely with a half-comic animosity, but who had involuntarily been the cause, within the last few days, of altering the whole complexion of my life and my ideas. But a week ago the rencontre would have been looked forward to as, at most, the subject of a joke ; and now I could not but regard it as a matter of interest—as, somehow or other, a link in a chain of important events ; for I had formed a hazy sort of half resolution, half presentiment, that BurrIDGE should be made to subserve what had suddenly become the engrossing object of my thoughts.

At the appointed hour next forenoon I duly repaired to the Cavalry Barracks, and on inquiring at the orderly-room as to the place where the Board was to assemble, was referred to G stable as the place where its

members might probably go, in the first instance, to examine the subject to be reported upon. I found no symptoms of a Board at G stable, and accordingly "drew" the mess-room for Captain Burridge. Captain Burridge was not there either, but I ascertained that his quarters were No. IV. C staircase, and in about a minute I was knocking at his door. Successful at last; a voice shouted, "Come in," adding, as I turned the handle of the door, "if you are not a dun or a pay-sergeant," and I was in the presence of my "double." He was considerably altered since I had last seen him five years ago. He was stouter and redder (was I stouter and redder too?), and these five years, aided by care, climate, or dissipation, had registered themselves pretty legibly in the lines about his mouth and eyes. Here and there, too, in his high-coloured whiskering, might be detected the tares which Time, the enemy, had prematurely begun to sow.

He was lounging in an arm-chair by a window, smoking a cigar, and playing with a terrier. His body was enveloped in a loose dressing-gown, and on his head was a smart smoking-cap ; the equipments of his legs and feet — regimental overalls with boots and spurs—were the only indications that he contemplated professional occupation that day. He sat up when I entered, and looked at me pretty stolidly.

“Captain Burridge, I think?” said I.

“Oh, of course ; you know that just as well as I know you’re Captain Bruce. Good morning ; sit down,” and he kept looking at me with the gravity of an owl, silent, for about a minute. I was not going to be out-stared, so I followed his example, and scanned his countenance like a mesmerist, devoting my attention a good deal to his right whisker, which I took to be a weak point, from the presence in it of one or two very rampagious white hairs.

"A lark, eh?" he remarked at last, laconically.

"Where?" said I, resolved not to be outdone.

"Why, here," he replied.

"I protest I don't see it," I said; and again there was a silence, and we stared away like basilisks.

"It *is* a lark," he insisted again.

"Is it?" I said, shifting my attention to his nose, in which there was a slight appearance of heat.

"What a beggar you are to stare!" he said, breaking down in the lark theory.

"Is it wonderful?" I rejoined. This posed him, and he was silent again for a while, at length remarking,—

"I see you're like me."

"So ill-natured people used to say," I replied. A low gurgling in his throat seemed to indicate that he was amused, and he said, with more animation,

"Come, that aint like me; I couldn't have said that. I said you were like me because you didn't seem to have any ideas."

I fairly laughed out at this, and Burridge gave a phlegmatic "haw, haw!"

"I had an idea, though, all the time I was looking at you—fact—I had two ideas."

"Yes?"

"Yes." And he submitted his boots, spurs, and overalls to a very searching inspection.

"What were they?" I hazarded.

"The first was, what a dam odd thing it is that you and I never made each other's acquaintance before; I suppose I hated you too much, though."

"You don't fancy the feeling wasn't reciprocated?"

"What! did you hate me too?" he cried, with some surprise.

"Like poison; and I'm not at all sure I don't do so still."

Again Burridge produced the same fat sounds of mirth, and relieved the intellectual strain he was undergoing by burning the terrier's nose with the end of his cigar—a process which the animal resented with savage growls and snappings.

“You had another idea, hadn't you?” I inquired.

He disengaged himself from the dog, and vacantly asked, “When?”

“Just now, when you were staring at me.”

“Oh yes, of course; I was thinking how you've aged, and how confoundedly yellow you've got. Am I as old and yellow?”

“As old and yellow? Why, you look as old as the hills; no fear of my being taken for you now. My father might—in fact, you rather remind me of him. As for yellow, no, you're not yellow, but you're worse—your face is like a lobster; I never

saw anything so red in all my life—as red as your whiskers used to be before they turned white.”

“Really? Upon your honour? What a bore!” and he went heavily to the chimney-glass and closely examined himself.

“It’s all these three confounded summers at Bangalore,” he said, sorrowfully. “But, hang it! red’s healthy, yellow isn’t.”

“But I’m not yellow.”

“Oh, the devil you arn’t! I like that,” and he sank into his chair again. “You smoke?” he inquired.

“I do.”

“Pipe or cigar?”

“Cigar.”

“Thought so — have one? Beer or brandy-and-soda?”

“Brandy-and-soda.”

“Could have sworn it! In a deep tumbler?”

“In a deep tumbler.”

"With little bits of ice bobbing about in it?"

"With little bits of ice bobbing about in it, if possible."

He sat up interested—almost energetic.

"Now, I'll make a bet you're fond of Gruyère cheese?"

I admitted it.

"And caviare?"

"Yes."

"And plover's eggs?"

"When they're fresh."

"And pickled oysters?"

"Certainly."

"Exactly—all my own tastes; I suppose our palates are quite the same shape?"

"Perhaps."

"What's your Christian name?"

"Donald."

"Donald! what a name! Fancy being like a fellow with a name like that!"

"I consider it a very handsome name."

"No?" (with great earnestness).

"Yes, I do. Pray what is yours?"

"Adolphus."

"Adolphus!—hideously namby-pamby!"

"No, it's not, it's so soft; in Italian it would be Adolfo—that's pretty. If an Italian Marchesa was in love with me she would say, 'Adolfo mio!' or 'Adolfino mio!'"

"Well, I suppose if an Italian Duchesa was in love with me she would say, 'Donaldio mio!' or 'Donaldino mio!'—twice as sonorous and musical."

"I can't say I agree with you. Here, Flyn! Flyn! bring a great deal of brandy-and-soda-water."

He certainly was a quaint specimen! He had that peculiar blending of stolidity and *naïveté*, of the elephant and the squirrel, of the imbecile and the humorous, and a certain kind of drollery which made it a toss-up whether one laughed *with* or *at* him,

which I don't think is to be found in any other mortal save only the British Plunger — of which he was, in some respects, an exaggerated type.

“But,” I said, these personalities being ended, “there was a Board, you know; how about it?”

“Oh, that's all right! that ass Roper was here, and I sent him over to look at the stable, and he came back; but I wasn't going to have him hanging about in my quarters, so I told him to say what he thought of the rack, and he began a long yarn, but I cut him short, and when he had said it was ‘in a horrid condition,’ I gave him a weed and a glass of dry curaçoa and sent him away. After you've had your brandy-and-soda, we'll stroll over and look at the thing, and I'll show you a new horse I've just bought. How do you like this hole?”

“Oh, pretty well.”

"Go much to town?"

"Not so much as I used to go from Canterbury, five years ago."

"Ah! you were too much in town then."

"That's what I used to say of you."

"What do you make of yourselves here?"

"Oh! there's rowing on the canal, and cricket, and rackets, and fives, and I ride about a good deal myself."

"It's too hot for all that; know any people hereabouts? Are they civil?"

"I knew no one till three or four days ago, and that puts me in mind that I owe you a dinner."

"How?"

"I ate yours the other day."

"You're chaffing."

"No, I'm not. I was asked to dine with a man I didn't know near F——, the other day, and I got into a wrong house where you were expected. The people only knew you very slightly—had hardly seen you, in



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fact; and, without knowing it, I passed for you the greater part of the evening, and never suspected that I wasn't being entertained by the man who had invited me."

"That beats cock-fighting; who were the people? But, stay, I do remember getting a note on the march one day, asking me to dine somewhere; but I forgot all about it, and don't believe I even answered it. What was the man's name?"

"Badger."

"Yes, Badger, of course; some one asked him to be civil to me, he said."

"Old Timbrel did."

"What! do you know old Timbrel?"

"No, I don't, but I heard enough about him the other night; *he* was your friend."

"To be sure, he told me he would introduce me to a capital dinner: was it good?"

"A 1."

"And the people?"

"As jolly as possible."

"Were they savage about the mistake?"

"Quite the reverse; asked me back, and said they would ask you as soon as you came down, to have the fun of seeing us together and comparing notes."

"And it was a good thing to be in for?"

"Unquestionably."

"All right; when shall we dine with Badger?"

"He's sure to ask us as soon as he knows you're here; but, in fact, he told me to come any day and take pot-luck."

"What a brick! he must have an early benefit; is he old?"

"Oh yes, as the hills—looks older than you, even."

"Bar chaff."

"Yes, he's really an old fellow, with an old wife and a large fortune."

"Kids?"

"None."

"Any chance of his adopting a fellow?"

"I should not say so; he has two nieces staying with him."

"Jolly girls?"

"Very."

"Pretty?"

"Beautiful: one of them, Lady Rose, is quite beautiful, though some people might, perhaps, admire her cousin Miss Mary Richmond—— hulloa! what's the matter?"

Burridge had bounced across the room, and seizing the unoffending terrier, then slumbering peacefully on the sofa, had begun to kick him round the table.

"The little beggar's always gnawing the bear's skin," he exclaimed. "Ah! ware mouthing—ware mouthing! will you do it again? will you? will you? will you?"

Eventually the dog was sent flying under the sofa.

"Ah, ha!" thought I—"rem acu tetigi; kick away, Captain Burridge—I see through you."

His face was very red and its expression much awakened at the conclusion of the dog episode; exercise might do that, of course.

"You said old Badger had nieces, didn't you?" he inquired, with a most elephantine attempt to recover his *insouciant* manner.

"Yes, Lady Rose O'Shea and Miss Mary Richmond—very nice girls both. By the by, you must have met Miss Richmond; her father is, or lately was, the General up in your last district."

"Ah! General Richmond; yes, I think—to be sure—a fair-haired girl?" he gasped.

"Very fair, indeed."

"Yes, met her at the assize ball at—at somewhere, and—and—take another weed, and let us stroll over to the stable."

We did so; we "sat upon" the hay-rack, condemned it in pompous language on portentous foolscap; we inspected Burridge's new purchase, and the rest of his horses;

we then adjourned to luncheon in the mess-room : but Burrige was not again that day the Burrige he had been at eleven o'clock A.M. On leaving him I expressed a hope that he would come and "look me up," to which he very heartily agreed ; but, on my suggesting that we should take steps for an early "pot-luck" with Badger in concert, he seemed to have changed his mind on that subject. "I've been knocking about too much lately," he explained—"too many big dinners ; and then the march : I'm not quite myself just at present ; and I'll not make myself known to Mr Badger yet awhile."

He didn't seem a bad fellow at all, but the contrary ; and the expression of his face when Miss Richmond's name was mentioned, clearly indicated anguish and sorrow rather than guilt and shame. I felt sorry for him—in spite of myself I compassionated Burrige ; but it was all very mysterious.

From this time my visits to the Hermit-

age were neither few nor far between, and Captain Crosstree would have been astonished if his head had been turned in any other direction. Sometimes, as I approached the house, I had dreadful relapses of shame and shyness, but no other disgraceful panic-flight took place. I was enabled to conquer these feelings by contrasting present pain with the far superior horrors of subsequent desolation and remorse ; for, in truth, to see Rose daily was a crying necessity, and the sun that went down upon a day when I had not seen her, was a sun whose rays had no brightness for me.

I developed immense cunning in devising pretexts for returning to the Hermitage. One day I had been enamoured of an air, and must borrow the music to have it arranged for the band ; the next, I must ride back to ask some question on behalf of the bandmaster ; the next day the music had to be returned, and it was—but minus a page ;

then the page had to be returned ; then I would go without an excuse ; then would come Badger's " pot-luck ;" then Badger would dine with me ; and (I blush to record it) one day I was mean enough to filch Badger's spectacle-case from the mess-room table, with the view of riding over with it next day,—and so on. Love laughs at locks and bars, and it wasn't likely he was going to be baffled in a case like this. I was, like Joe Bagstock, " amazing sly." Burrige not only fulfilled his promise of " looking me up," but became a constant *habitué* of my hut ; indeed he occupied the vacant position of Blackstock, that unappeased Achilles continuing to sulk in his tent, " cherishing dark thoughts in his shaggy breast." Burrige, with his plunging frankness, swore he had taken a violent fancy to me—said it was a kind of Corsican brother feeling ; and ere many days begged to be allowed to celebrate the commencement of our friendship

and endear our future relations by addressing me as "Donald," "Donaldo," or "Donaldino;" and this boon being conceded, he necessarily became "Adolpho," "Adolphino;" or "Dolly." A fortnight ago I could as easily have conceived myself apostrophising Blackstock as "Blackstocko," or "Blackstockello," but times were changed. In my dreamy and abstracted mood it suited better that this heavy and *insouciant* dragoon should lounge about my hut, careless whether his stolid remarks and harmless prattle were responded to, than that Blackstock, full of eager, vulgar animation, should clamour for my attention while he discoursed of "pivots" and "points of appui," of "knapsacks," "sea-kits," and the enhanced price of blacking. There was a gulf between me and all that sort of thing now, and a hedge of roses through which I could not look back. Burridge was a welcome visitor. I soon found that his presence in my hut was like the

undisturbing presence of a docile dog, which gives one all the advantage of solitude without the forlorn feeling of being quite alone. He dropped in almost every night after mess, and when I was in a humour to be spoken to, would inundate me with questions, all relating more or less to the subject on which alone I found conversation bearable at present. His good-breeding might have dictated this, but I soon discovered that he too was amazing sly. His questions invariably bore upon my visits to the Hermitage—to the place itself—to its inmates—to their manners and customs; and the quaint approaches by which he skirmished up to his object were often most ludicrous.

“Badger in town to-day?” he would begin, carelessly.

“Yes, he was.”

“Very hot for him.”

“Very.”

“Fat, isn’t he?”

"Yes, decidedly fat."

"He must feel the heat awfully?"

"Looks as if he did."

"Drinks a lot of cooling stuff at dinner likely?"

"Oceans."

"Claret-cup and things of that sort?"

"Yes."

"And sleeps after dinner?"

"Sometimes."

"Bore for you?"

"Oh no! I contrive to amuse myself."

"Empty his bottles, eh?"

"No, I don't drink much."

"You sleep too, then?"

"No, I don't; sometimes I go out into the garden."

"Oh! I see; solitary weed among the flower-beds?"

"No, I seldom go out alone, and never smoke there."

"Oh!"

"Never."

A pause.

"Mrs Badger goes out with you, I suppose?"

"No, very seldom; she sleeps too."

"I forgot, you said he had nieces staying with him—they go out with you then?"

"Yes, they go out with me."

"Nice girls, you said?"

"Charming."

"Jolly for you?"

"Not unpleasant."

"And after you go in what happens?"

"There is music."

"What! does *she* sing?"

"Who? Mrs Badger?"

"No, hang it!—that is, yes, of course."

"No, Mrs Badger snores."

"Badger doesn't sing?"

"No, Badger snores too."

"Snores too, ah! The nieces sing then?"

"One of them."

"What, what! the fair one? I mean Lady what's-her-name?"

"No, the fair one is Miss Mary Richmond, your old acquaintance, you know."

"Oh yes! the fair one is Miss Mary Richmond, my old acquaintance" (and he dwells lovingly on each letter of the name).

"She sings?"

"Never."

"Never!" and poor Burridge heaves a sigh and becomes silent; and, touched with a sudden sympathy, I recognise that the poor fellow's heart, filled like my own with love, requires, like mine, some daily sustenance, however small, to satisfy its intolerable cravings. This sort of thing went on for some time, till at last one night Burridge, plying his usual catechism, selected "dress" as his "cover" in skirmishing up to *the* object. He began by inquiring into the state of the Badger liveries; was anxious to know if the men wore gold garters; had

had an idea that stockbrokers' servants always wore gold garters and red plush waistcoats; but perhaps Badger wasn't a dressy stockbroker: how was he as to that personally? Wore voluminous white waistcoats and immense gills did he? Voluminous white waistcoats did very well on big men; what should I say was Badger's measurement round the chest now? and then Mrs Badger's dress gradually came on the tapis,—the colour of her dress and cap-ribbons, *her* probable measurement round the chest, and so the ball past on to Lady Rose. White—a pretty colour. Always wore white did she? It wasn't a colour, wasn't it? What the deuce was it then? And her ribbons? Violet? Pretty that for a brunette, but wouldn't suit her cousin by my description. Miss—Miss—, yes, Miss Richmond.

“No,” I said, “she generally wears green ribbons.”

“Green ribbons, does she? ah!” and

Burridge's eyes stared dreamily into vacancy, as if he were conjuring up a vision of Mary with her sunny locks thus attired.

"And Lady Rose's ornaments?"

"Oh! very simple—a pearl cross to-night."

"A pearl cross!—chaste, that; and Miss—her cousin's?"

"Oh! she wore none. Stay, she had on something I noticed to-night; yes, a plain thick gold locket, with some diamond letters on it."

"What! A E I?" exclaimed Burridge, springing up and upsetting the table.

"Yes, that was the word; but what is the matter?"

"My dear Donald, give me your hand! I'm not so utterly wretched yet. God bless you, Donald! You'll think I am mad. I daresay I am. I'll explain it all to you to-morrow—to-night I can't stay—A E I! A E I!" and he dashed out of the hut.

I was not the least surprised by this ebullition : I was prepared for it—I had seen it coming. BurrIDGE was evidently brimful of love and sorrow, and his open and unartificial nature was yearning for a confidant. A very short time had sufficed to show me that if he appeared to Miss Richmond to be trifling with her feelings, in doing so he was involuntarily compelled to play a part most distressing and distasteful to himself ; for that he loved her with the whole of his simple heart it required no sage to divine.

CHAPTER VIII.

“O Luve will venture in where it daur na weel be seen,
O Luve will venture in where wisdom ance has been.”

—BURNS.

LOVE is said to be selfish. It is well said, for I fear it is very selfish. The engrossing passion draws, in the lover's mind, an isolating circle round the beloved object and himself, and the rest of his kind are only thought of in so far as they can be used in ministering to the advancement of his wishes. Stray crumbs of charity may, indeed, occasionally fall from his table to the outer world; but on examination it will be found that, by some subtle contrivance, they are merely taking a circuitous route to the altar of all his worship.

At first I had had a dim feeling in the case of Burrige that it might be made of use to me. I had never minutely considered how; whether, foiled by the blackness of the Dragoon's villany, I was to stand forth in the eyes of Lady Rose as a being of extraordinary and shining virtues, or whether I was to unravel the tangled web of her cousin's sorrows and perplexities, and, by bringing Burrige to himself and restoring to Mary Richmond her lover, thereby make capital in favour of myself with Lady Rose, I know not. To-night as I went to bed I inclined to the latter theory, and felt it was well I should be Burrige's confidant. I felt kindly towards him. He was a good fellow. I might be able to help him, and thereby myself also—why not? Such is the unselfishness of a lover.

The next forenoon Adolphus arrived at my hut on horseback.

"I want you to come, Donald," he said,

“for a long ride. I have a lot to say to you, and in these confounded huts you can hear your next-door neighbour thinking. Come away out with me, where we can really be alone, and I can speak.”

I complied at once, but Crosstree and I both experienced a pang of disappointment when Burrige insisted that our heads should be turned away from F——. A day lost! a day without Rose! a day without a sun! Confound the fellow and his yarn! Such is the unselfishness of a lover. My companion rode along for a time in silence, not from stolidity, however, for he was evidently much agitated; but he was a veritable Anglo-Saxon, and we know what intolerable torture the verbal expression of any deep emotion brings to that remarkable race. Burrige was silent, then, at first, and it was not my part to commence the delicate subject. At last, after various shy sidelong glances and a cough or two, he did begin.

"Did you think I was mad last night, Bruce?"

"No, I did not—not the least."

"I am going to make a confession to you."

"I know you are—pray go on."

"Miss Richmond, you know—I've been a hypocrite about her, Donald."

"I know you have."

"How?"

"Never mind—go on."

"I knew her before, old fellow."

"Yes, you said so yourself."

"But I don't mean in that way—at a ball, or a hundred balls; I knew her intimately."

"Oh!"

"Tremendously intimately — in fact, couldn't be more so. Why shouldn't I tell you? I was in love with her, I am in love with her, I shall always be in love with her —there, you think I'm a fool, of course; what's the odds?"

"I don't think you're a fool; I admire you, I glory in you," I cried (thus wafting a little incense to my own private goddess).

"The oddest thing of all," he continued (and the foolish creature actually blushed), "is that she—she liked me tremendously, old fellow—loved me, I may say, like the very—ahem! Oh yes! Mary was as fond of me as I was of her—if that was possible—I do believe; wasn't it odd?"

"Very; but there's no accounting for tastes."

"Well, loving her as I did, and as I do, and as I swear, by George, I shall do, forever-and-ever-amen, what have I done but gone and broken her heart?"

"How?"

"I'll tell you presently: did you ever break a fellow's—that is, a girl's heart, Bruce?"

"N-not many. No, I'm not sure that I ever *quite* broke one."

"Ah! you don't know what it is to break a heart that you love, at all events, and a heart that loves you. Damme, it's awful, sir, to think of that girl!—the best little girl, the jolliest little trump in Europe, suffering and pining, as I know she is, and all for my fault—I who, to save her any sort of grief or trouble, would be glad to have red-hot rusty nails hammered into the small of my back by the farrier-major, or be shod with red-hot shoes like—like St Paul or some one, or have my flesh torn by wolves and wild horses, like Miss Menken—I mean Mazeppa; it's awful, Donald—it's intolerable. I haven't got many wits, you know, but I shall lose the few I have if this goes on much longer."

"But what is the reason of all this? if you love her and she loves you, why should you break her heart? If you can't afford to marry now, tell her so, and wait in patience; better times will come soon. Uncle Badger

is rich, and, after all, he and the General are but mortal, and——”

“No, no, no—stop; it isn’t that—that’s a trifle. I wish it was only that—I have plenty of money; it can do me no good: but I’ll tell you the whole thing from the beginning.

“Well, Donald, I was on detachment with my troop last year at B——, up in the north; not a bad place, B——, the biggest trout you ever saw in a little lake there—great yellow fellows, running up to three and four pounds; and you could hunt with three fairish packs; and the shooting was capital, and there were some really good houses in the country, and altogether it was a good detachment, and I managed to keep it for a year, which was luck, as things go nowadays, you know. Well, there was a fellow Stainton—a married fellow—who had been in the Fourth, kept no end of a good house about four miles from our place,

and was always glad to see a soldier, as old soldiers ought to be, and generally are. We were always there—Tom Carleton and Baby Williams and I—always. Fellows used to ask if we had moved our barrack-furniture over there; and, upon my honour, I had two horses standing in his stables nearly half the winter: and then his claret—nothing but magnums—and the date, seldom younger than '48, and often older, and everything else, you know, in the same farm. It was no end of a billet, was Charley Stainton's; but I'm afraid he's smashed in that infernal bank thing—what was it? I forget; but I suspect Charley is smashed, and there are no more coverts to shoot and magnums to drink for good fellows at B——; a bore, isn't it? these banks are always——”

“My dear Adolfo, let's get to the subject,” I broke in, foreseeing that either his discursive habits of thought, or a shyness

about entering on the real topic, was likely to lead him into a maze of singularly uninteresting statistics. "Put the spurs in, old fellow, and face it. You met Miss Richmond there, at Stainton's?"

"Yes, I did. The first time it was at an archery-party. I can see her now standing looking on under a big chestnut-tree, with a little white hat trimmed with blue and a feather. What do you call these birds, Donald, that can only be caught at night, in the dead of winter, on the tops of the highest mountains?"

"Upon my life I don't know; but it doesn't signify, does it?"

"No, no. Well, it was a feather out of one of these birds she was wearing, and looking so jolly. You know her eyes?"

"Intimately." I had some reason to.

"Well, the moment I saw her eyes I felt—I'll be hanged if I can tell you what I felt!"

“ Oh ! I can imagine.”

“ All I know is, I saw nothing else all day—blue eyes, blue eyes, blue eyes everywhere. There was a carpet dance afterwards, and I was introduced. I felt such a fool, and she rather seemed to chaff me (some girls go in for that at first, you know), but not so bad as she chaffed Baby Williams. He was trying to make the running with her, you know—a conceited young duffer, too. He had just exchanged to us from the Blues, and was telling her lots of fine things he had been doing at Windsor, and she said to him, ‘ But what happens to your lessons all this time ? ’ and the Baby couldn’t understand, you know ; and then she said, ‘ I wonder the provost lets you out so much ; ’ and then the Baby knew what she meant, that she thought he was still at Eton, you know—ha ! ha ! ha ! And wasn’t he disgusted ? And I laughed, and she laughed, and the Baby went away in a rage, and

somehow I felt better, and then we went in to supper, and got no end of friends. I thought she was an angel—and so she is, by Jupiter! and I'm the greatest ruffian in the hemisphere."

"Get on, Adolfo, and please don't trouble about details." He was going to be a bore evidently.

"Well, I saw her again at church on Sunday, and then it was the same story—nothing but blue eyes, blue eyes; and she rather looked at me, I thought, and I was ashamed of myself for staring. I spoke to her when she came out, and she dropped her prayer-book, and then a flower she was carrying, and I gave her the book, but asked her to let me keep the flower—confoundedly impertinent, wasn't it? But I couldn't help it, and, I suppose, she saw that, for she let me keep it, although I suspect she was a little angry at first. Anyhow, I kept it, and wore it till it died; and, would you

believe it? I'm wearing it now next my heart, and I will wear it there till I die. I swear it. The next time I saw her was—let me see, where was it?"

"Oh! I don't think it matters," I broke in; "let us get to the results, my good fellow. It isn't necessary to recall every little incident."

"Yes, but there are some things I must tell you, you know. I don't quite remember where I met her next. It was immediately after, for she was staying first at Stainton's and then at another house in the neighbourhood, and there was a lot going on at the time. It was a picnic I met her next at, I believe. I remember Thornton, her father's aide-de-camp, was always hanging about her at it. I remember beginning to hate Thornton, though I had liked him before, and I was devilish glad when Tommy Carleton, by accident of course, let off a champagne cork into his eye and blackened it;

and that was an odd thing to be pleased at, you know—so ill-natured, eh? Well, then, there was a dinner-party at Stainton's, and I took her in to dinner, and she was awfully jolly—seemed to take an interest in what I said, which nobody ever seemed to do before, you know, except my grandmother, perhaps, who believes in me, and is a little touched in the upper story; and after dinner she sang something about a garden of roses, and I said something civil, and she looked queer and jolly, and blushed, and I felt queer and jolly, and I suppose I blushed too; and then neither of us spoke another word that night. When I got to barracks I said to myself, 'You've fallen in love with Mary Richmond, Adolphus, and you're the d—dest rascal out of the United States of America.'

"But why?—why?"

"I'll tell you presently. Not long after that we gave a little dance in the mess-room at B——, and she came. We did it very

well, I can tell you. Mrs Stainton came over and did hostess—a jolly old girl she was—and, of course, I was host. The people called me ‘Paterfamilias,’ and ‘Papa,’ I remember. Well, I suppose I was excited with the whole thing—entertaining the people, and so on—and rather lost command of myself, and couldn’t conceal my love for Mary; and I kept asking her to dance with me, and she kept dancing with me, and people looked and giggled. I didn’t care, and she didn’t care; and she threw over Thornton, and that ass Ducksworth, the county member, and Tommy Carleton. At last she said, ‘I really mustn’t dance with you any more;’ and I said I wouldn’t dance another step that night then; and she said, ‘What! not with Miss Mapleton?’ (they had some humbugging chaff about Miss Mapleton and me); and I said ‘No,’ and went on talking a lot of nonsense about going into a monastery, and that sort of

thing, for I was awfully excited. And then she said, Did I really care so much about dancing with her? and that there were many other better dancers in the room; and then I fairly blurted out, 'But there's only one YOU;' and she looked at me with such a look in her eyes, Donald, and then looked down, and I said, 'Never mind dancing, if you're tired; only sit down and let me look at you.' Then she said, 'But you can look at me dancing with anybody else;' and I said, 'I can't bear to see you dancing with anybody else; it's agony to me: I could kill anybody else;' and then somehow I found myself (scoundrel that I was) telling her that I was dying of love for her, and she said—— well, it don't matter what she said; but at all events, Donald, she let me know that she was tremendously fond of me; and I took a glove from her, and her card and pencil, and a rose from her hair; and then Mrs Stainton came and



"But there's only one YOU!"

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"But there's only one YOU!"

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said it was three o'clock—time to go ; and I didn't know whether it was three o'clock in the afternoon or three o'clock in the morning. Then she went away, and I remember I went into the supper-room and drank two tumblers of champagne, and sang songs ; and I remember a fellow saying, ' What's happened to you, old boy ? I always thought you were an owl before, but to-night you're as good as a play ; ' and I felt mad and miserable and jolly all at once, for I knew I was a scoundrel. Oh Donald ! I can't tell you what I felt next morning when I woke up and saw her glove and her rose and all her things lying on the table. I thought I might as well take a pistol and shoot myself, for I had deceived her and cheated her like a low thief ; but I could not help it—upon my word of honour I couldn't—and I hadn't meant to do it ; but it was done, done, and couldn't be undone, for I was MARRIED already."

“MARRIED already?”

“Yes, MARRIED already.”

Neither of us spoke for some time after this astounding revelation. At last Burridge broke silence.

“You think me a scoundrel and a villain, Bruce, I know that, and I deserve it; but I wasn’t a designing scoundrel, and somehow I don’t *feel* like a villain. If you knew all you would make allowances for me; and if you knew the infernal grief I’ve suffered, I think you would be a little sorry for me, and perhaps not turn your back on me. I can’t be surprised if you do, or blame you for it, of course; but it is a dismal thing, with all this trouble on a fellow’s mind, to have no friend—not a soul in the world. And I have taken such a liking to you, old fellow; do you think you really must desert me altogether?”

There was a tear in the poor fellow’s eye, a pathos in his usually stolid voice, and a

simplicity about the recital of his sorrow and remorse that touched me, and might have softened an austerer moralist; and who was I to refuse this artless sinner my sympathy and my friendliest offices?

“Turn my back on you, old fellow!” I cried, “I will not; I am sure you would never designedly do anything cruel, or unmanly, or unlike a gentleman. I won’t turn my back on you—depend upon that. I can see you must have behaved with terrible weakness; but we’re all weak miserable sinners, and I won’t preach, for the chances are I would have done the same or worse myself.”

“Thank you, Donald; you wouldn’t, I know, but you’re a good fellow for saying so.”

“Will you tell me about this—this deplorable marriage?”

“Of course I will—a half confession is no confession; you would not understand any-

thing if I didn't, besides. Let us get off and picket the ponies, and sit down under this big tree. It's awfully hot, and I think I can speak better when I'm sitting still."

We accordingly dismounted and disposed ourselves, he to tell and I to listen to Burridge's story.

CHAPTER IX.

“Lassù di sopra in la vita serena
Rispos' io lui, mi smarri' in una valle
Avanti che l'età mia fosse piena.”

—DANTE, *Inferno*.

BURRIDGE'S STORY.

“WHEN I first went into the army (I suppose you and I have about the same service), I was in infantry, you know, Donald—the ——th Light Infantry—not a bad lot, but changed, as all the two-battalion regiments are now. Well, I joined the depot in Ireland, and had my head nearly drilled off; for it was at the beginning of the Crimean war, and they were drilling and shipping off as fast as they could. I

was uncommonly glad, I can tell you, when I passed my drill, and was told off for the next draft for the seat of war. I was a very young ensign indeed, and if it was delightful to any of them to get away from the humdrum barrack-square and the eternal sergeant-major, it was delightful to me you may be sure. I'll never forget the night before we sailed from Queenstown—it was a great night altogether. We were all wild with delight at going to see the fighting. The old birds hoped to make up for lost time, and all we youngsters expected to be captains in a month. I remember the only thing I regretted was, that I should be promoted too soon to have many chances of carrying the colours before the enemy. Ah! there was another thing I was sorry for—my brother Jack; he's dead and gone long ago, poor soul! He came down to see us off, and was tremendously cut up at parting with me; and seeing him so cut up cut me

up worse, you know. I remember he said, 'I'm afraid we'll never meet again, Dolly!' Dismal, wasn't it? Of course he meant that I was safe to be killed; but I wasn't, and he died of pleurisy."

What a difficulty the fellow had in starting! Every straw seemed to act as a drag on his wheels; but, on the *vires-acquiriteundo* principle, I let him have his head.

"We had a jolly voyage and glorious weather. All the sea—the Mediterranean, I mean—was crowded with ships and transports — strong fellows going out to be wounded or killed, and wounded fellows coming home to get strong or die. Every ship we met we signalled, 'Has the place fallen?' and when the answer came, 'No,' we all cheered like madmen. We were awfully impatient. When we got into the Black Sea everybody was in a fever; and I remember, when my servant called me at four o'clock one morning, and shouted,

‘Here we are at the war, yer anner! glory be to God!’ I rushed upon deck with nothing on but my shirt, and saw the sulky-looking rocks at the mouth of Bala-klava harbour through a drizzling rain, and felt a little dashed, and thought to myself, ‘Hang it! I’ll never get away from this infernal place, alive or dead, either;’ and then there was a tremendous boom! boom! boom!—the first gun I ever heard fired in earnest—and I was as right and jolly as possible in a moment. But I beg your pardon, Donald, I forgot—of course you went through the whole thing yourself, and here I am yarning away like an old man-of-war’s-man in his native village. I beg your pardon.”

“Oh, don’t mention it,” said I; but my tone implied that any repetition of the sort of thing was not expected.

“Well, I needn’t talk about the war. Of course I went through what was left of it,

and paid two visits to the blessed Redan ; got out of that more frightened than hurt, ha ! ha ! Then, you remember, when the peace came none of us knew where we were going. I was horridly sold when the peace came. I liked the wild sort of life—didn't you ? but since it was come, I hoped we might be sent off to some wild sort of place, where there was lots of shooting and adventures with—with natives, and that kind of thing ; but I was sold again. I remember the colonel coming down to the mess-hut the night he got the orders about our move. He was looking disgusted. 'Where do you think we're going to, gentlemen ?' he said. 'Has the order come, sir ?' every one shouted. 'Yes, it's come. Can you guess where we're off to ?' Then we all began to sing out something—'Home,' 'Canada,' 'India,' 'Cape,' 'China,' 'Japan,' 'Mauritius,' &c. &c. No one ever thought of the Mediterranean, as our headquarters had

gone from there to the war. After there had been a lot of guesses, and every one wrong, the old major growled out—I can hear him now—‘Faith, I believe we must be going to the devil!’ and the colonel took the order out of his pocket and said, ‘That’s the nearest guess that’s been made yet, major; we’re going to Malta.’ Most of the fellows swore a good deal, for they had had enough of that kind of thing. I felt awfully sorry myself. I hated the idea of Malta; I couldn’t say why, exactly. I think it must have been a presentiment. Do you believe in presentiments, Donald?”

“More or less.”

“Well, I hated going there, but there we went; you’ve been there, I suppose?”

“Oh yes, frequently,” said I, fearing a minute historical and geological survey of the island.

“Well, it was a hot summer—intolerably hot; and they had invented the brigade

system, and we were worried to death—drilled by the colonel, grilled by the brigadier, and eaten alive by the governor. It was abominable. I thought of taking leave; if I had I might have been all right now, but I didn't, which was my bad luck. At last it was determined, well on in the season, to get up some garrison theatricals, and I went in strong for them. I don't mean to say I could act, but I was fond of that sort of thing, and I supported the idea, and put my name down for a £50 subscription. I had more money than most of the fellows, you see, and they thought that immense, and put me on the committee at once. I liked that, and gave another 'fifty' for scenery. After that, the fellows suddenly seemed to think I was an authority, and consulted me about everything; and I liked that, for I was a youngster, you know. So when it came to be a question what we were to do for ladies, and some one sug-

gested that the youngest-looking fellows should take the female parts, I pooh-poohed the idea, and said, 'Nonsense, get 'em out from London;' and when they stared and said something about its being salt, I said, 'D—n the expense, I'll guarantee another hundred;' and then every one cheered and said, 'Bravo, Burridge!' and it was settled. But they didn't let me in for a whole hundred, for the governor and the brigadiers and other swells were put on their mettle when they heard that an ensign was shelling out for everything; and the colonel got in a rage and cried, 'D—n his impudence! put *me* down for "fifty"—that'll show him!' Just as if I cared, and wasn't as pleased as Punch to get his 'fifty'—the ridiculous old noodle.

"Well, we sent home to a fellow on leave to negotiate for a couple of actresses to come out for two months to play three nights a-fortnight. By this time it was late

autumn, and before long we heard that two were coming out by the next mail—Miss Beatrice Armine and Miss Carlotta Seymour (jolly names, weren't they?) of the Princess's, the Haymarket, the Adelphi, and the provinces—rather more than less of the latter, I suspect. Out they came accordingly. Beatrice Armine (Dick Winslow, who had been at Oxford, swore he remembered her under the name of Sue Mutton, daughter of a hairdresser in the High Street) wasn't a bad sort of little girl, good-natured, quite young, cheery, and rather pretty, but she dropped her 'h's' all over the place, and was a regular cormorant as far as garlic was concerned. As for Carlotta Seymour, she was—she was a showy woman—turned of thirty—ten years older than me. She was handsome, yes, she *was* handsome, but she had a bad face, cold and sneering; and then she set up for a genius and mystery. To hear her talk you would have believed

that she was the daughter of a royal duke in disguise, and granddaughter of the Tragic Muse.

“ Well, being on the committee, and standing a lot of tin and that, of course I got to know these women immediately ; and I used to think it rather a swell thing to be always about them ; riding with them, or standing them dinners at the hotel, or dropping into their rooms after mess and ordering in no end of suppers. Most of the committee used to come to the suppers too, but I used to pay—I preferred to pay, because I could patronise outsiders and take them in. I liked to say to a fellow, ‘ Dis-engaged to-night, old boy ? Dine with me at mess, and I’ll take you afterwards to see *the* Seymour, and *the* Armine ; they’ll be delighted to see you as a friend of *mine*.’ And of course they were delighted, for every new fellow was sure to do something for them—give them a dinner or a drive,

or a mount or something, you may be sure. So every one was pleased, and no one more than myself. I thought I was no end of a man of the world—quite a celebrated fellow in the garrison, and that every one was talking of me and my dramatic suppers—confounded little goose! and I remember being as proud as Lucifer when even the colonel noticed it; and one night when I left mess rather early, his saying, ‘Is Dante going to his Beatrice, or Werther to his Charlotte?’ I knew in a kind of way that he meant the suppers, and I said, ‘Both, sir,’ and every one roared; and I began to think, and I *did* think, by Jove! that I was a clever fellow after all. Carlotta kept telling me I was, and of course she was a judge, I thought. I was rather inclined to cotton to Beatrice at first, but so was every one else, and it was a bore always struggling with a dozen fellows for who was to get next her and that. And at last one

night Carlotta said she was astonished that a fellow of my 'soul' should go in for Beatrice; she was disappointed in me, she said, and that Beatrice was a vulgar uneducated little milliner and a designing toad, and that it was one of the trials of her lot to be associated with her, but that she was supported by the divine aspirations of genius; and then she cried a little, and told me about Beatrice's garlic and 'h's,' though of course I knew about them; and then she said that it had been one of her few comforts in this desolate island to believe that the only man with a spark of genius (meaning me, ha! ha!) had recognised a kindred spark in her—and so on. But now she saw she was mistaken, and must try to bear it as best she might. Then she cried again, and went on humbugging me, and I swallowing it all, till I swore I quite agreed with her about Beatrice (who had snubbed me two or three times, by the by), and that

I recognised the spark of genius and all that, and thought her the cleverest and handsomest woman of the day. She did look uncommon well, by Jove! And then she asked to call me 'Adolphus,' and I was to call her 'Carlotta;' and that was settled. And then she cried again, and thought I must 'think her bold,' and I said 'No;' and she said something about 'angelic boy,' and Venus and Adonis, and a lot of gammon I didn't understand, though I thought it all very fine. Then she came and sat close by me, and once, when she was crying (she had two or three rounds of that kind of thing), she dropped her head on my shoulder, and left no end of a white powdery mark on my shell-jacket. I know the old crocodile wanted me to kiss her, but I didn't then. May the devil fly away with her! After that she seemed regularly to take me over, and I could scarcely call myself my own master; I wasn't—but I

was proud of it; and as I rode along with her I liked to see fellows looking and grinning. I thought they were saying, 'There goes Burridge, the lucky dog!'

"I was obliged to go out with her every day, and to see her to rehearsal and back from rehearsal, and to the play and back from the play; and between the acts she required champagne, and would take it from no one's hand but mine. I couldn't leave her side for an instant but she was holloaing out, 'Where's Adolphus?' so it became a sort of byword in the garrison when anybody wanted anybody; and one night Jack Whitecroft of the Artillery got screwed, and when Carlotta came on by herself as what-do-you-call-her, in the 'Lady of Lyons,' in a solemn part, he holloaed out, 'Where's Adolphus?' and the house nearly came down; but I'll be hanged if I wasn't proud of that too.

"All the time I was tired to death of her,

but she seemed immensely fond of me, and I was proud of that and the whole thing, and stuck to it. Her birthday came, and I gave a big dinner (it was her twenty-second birthday she said) in her honour, and presented her with a diamond bracelet. Then she asked me to write her some verses; I was ashamed to say I couldn't, so I got Travers to write some. He was an awfully clever chaffy fellow, and the poem was full of the biggest words you ever saw (I didn't understand a word of it); but somehow she didn't seem to like the verses, and said suddenly, 'On your honour, did you write this?' and of course I was obliged to say 'No,' and that Fred Travers had written them; and she would never speak to Fred again. Fred had put some of his horrid chaff in them, I suspect.

"As the time began to draw on for them to go away, she seemed to get fonder and fonder of me, and treated my opinion with

immense respect, and kept asking me how I thought such and such a passage ought to be spouted, and what flowers and dresses she should wear. Then she asked my advice about her future plans. She was disgusted with her present life, she said—wanted to leave the stage, but didn't know what on earth to do. She could not go to her father; he had held high diplomatic appointments, but in a personal quarrel at cards with the Emperor of Russia he had permitted himself to strike his Majesty across the table. The result was, he had been sent to the mines in Siberia, and she was left friendless, friendless! then she would cry, and, by Jupiter! I believe I used to cry too. At last one day she said she had something very important to consult me about, but I must try to be calm—would I promise to be calm? I swore I would, and she told me that she had just had an offer of marriage there—in the island—and

that the suitor held the highest rank. He had never spoken to her, but had fallen desperately in love with her on the stage ; and his official position making it impossible for him to come to her personally, he had written offering her his heart and hand. She was not at liberty to divulge his name, but I might guess ; and said as much as led me to understand that it was either the governor or one of the brigadiers. Then she cried out, ‘ How pale you are ! ’—but I swear I wasn’t—and ran and got a big glass of sherry, and made me toss it off. Then she told me to be calm, and asked me if I could bear her to go on, and I said, ‘ Of course I could.’ So she went on and told me that *he* (meaning the governor or one of the brigadiers) was awfully jealous of me, and that his aides-de- —— she meant his emissaries—were always watching outside the windows, and what should I advise her to do ?

“Now, Donald, I didn’t care a straw about the woman, but somehow the idea of one of these bigwigs wanting to marry her made me prouder of her being so taken up with me; and I didn’t like the idea of her marrying any one else—heaven knows why.

“So I said it would be sacrificing her youth and beauty to—to something or other; and she cried and said I had a noble soul, and that *that* was conclusive; and she tore up a pink note, which I supposed to be *his* note, and trode upon it, and bawled out, ‘Love conquers all!’ Then she gave me another big glass of sherry, and said she had felt certain my feelings would be outraged, and I vowed they *were* outraged, and that I should like to shoot the governor or one of the brigadiers. At that moment in came Beatrice Armine, and didn’t Carlotta look savage and drop into her?

“Next day I got a fever, and was con-

foundedly ill. Carlotta sent me notes every day—two or three times a-day—and splendid bouquets, and oranges and things; but I was ill for a fortnight, and before I was up again, or able to answer her notes, she and Beatrice had gone. Their passages had been taken by the committee, you see, and they were obliged to go. When I was getting round, the colonel came to see me—he was a kind old boy; and after he had asked all about my illness and that, he said, ‘It was a lucky illness for you, my boy, and all your friends ought to be glad of it.’ I said, ‘Why?’ and he said, ‘It saved you from that fiend of a woman, by all I can hear;’ and I blazed out at the colonel, and told him he must retract that word, and he laughed good-naturedly, and said that if I did not like the word, of course he would, but that he was deuced glad she was off. That put me on my mettle, and I said that if it suited me to see her, of course I could

still do so. And he said, 'How?' and I said, 'Go on leave, of course.' Then the colonel's back got up, and he said he would take uncommon good care I got no leave, if that was what I was going to be at, and left me. I was a good deal spoiled by this time and savage, and sick of Malta, and I wanted a change, and perhaps I *did* miss Carlotta. So that very day I wrote and accepted an exchange I had been offered into the —— Hussars, then in India. The colonel couldn't stop that, you know. He was awfully good when I was going away. He said, 'I'm sorry you're going, Dolly, and we're all sorry; I think you're foolish, but every one must judge for himself. I wish you luck, and if you wish it for yourself steer clear of that theatrical friend of yours, my boy.' I wish to heaven I had! Well, I went home with six months' leave to England, and to join my regiment in India when that expired. I went to London first, and found

Carlotta in swell rooms in Half-Moon Street. She had a jolly little brougham, and everything in great style. She was as fond of me as ever, but she said she was writing a tragedy and awfully busy. Charles Kean was to act in it, and was so impatient to begin that he gave her no peace: and therefore she could only see me at certain times, and mustn't be seen out with me, or Charles Kean would think she was idling, and it was so important to keep in with him. I smelt tobacco two or three times in her room, and one day saw no end of a swell cigar-case on her table, with an earl's coronet and the letter M on it, and she said Charles Kean had been there ballyragging her about her tragedy, and had forgotten it in his rage. Then I noticed to her that it was odd he should have a coronet and M on his case; and she laughed and said it was a good joke—a capital joke; that Kean had stolen it in fun from Charles Matthews, who, she supposed I knew,

had lately been made a count by the French Emperor for his masterly interpretation of Sir Charles Coldstream in French. Well, she was as fond of me as ever; but there was so much bother and mystery and trouble about seeing her I got sick of it, and left town, and went away down to my grandmother's in Rutlandshire, promising, however, to see Carlotta before I left for India. I heard nothing of her for three months, and then, all of a sudden, her letters came pouring in day after day, and I was obliged to tell bangers to my grandmother about them. She was on the old tack again—wanted to consult me on a very delicate matter which could not be committed to writing; and when was I going up to town, and how was I going out to India, what ship, and all the rest of it. I stayed down in Rutlandshire till the last moment; I was going round the Cape in a steamer—I preferred that to overland—and I didn't get to town till two days

before we were to sail from Gravesend. I found Carlotta in very dingy lodgings in Greek Street, Soho, this time, and she explained that she was living there to be near the refugees, that there was a conspiracy on foot to rescue her governor from the Siberian mines, and that she was plotting night and day with the refugees.

“ While I was with her a villanous-looking man, in his shirt-sleeves, with a short pipe in his mouth, put his head in at the door without knocking, and seeing me, grinned, tapped his nose, and went out, saying something about his name being ‘easy’ and his spirit ‘fly,’ in remarkably good English, though a little vulgar I thought, considering he was a foreigner—Count Arnold Doldorowski, a Pole, she said, and a colonel of cavalry once, and who had sworn by the beard of Poniatowski, or some fellow of that sort, to rescue her governor from the mine, or perish in the attempt. I noticed that her

room and the passage were all blocked up with trunks and boxes packed and corded, and I said to her, 'You look as if you were on the wing, like me, Carlotta;' and she said, 'I *am* on the wing, and liker you than than you think for,' and laughed. Then I said, 'Where are you off to?' and she said, 'I asked you six weeks ago to come up and give me your advice upon a very delicate subject, and you never came. I was dreadfully harassed, so I was obliged, for the first time since I have known you, to decide for myself. I'm going to India.' 'To India!' 'Yes, to India;' and wasn't it an odd coincidence, she said. But the strangest thing of all was, that she was going in the same ship with me—there was a coincidence for me, if I liked. *They* had actually taken her passage in the Golden Fleece! We agreed that perhaps it *was* the most extraordinary thing on record; and then I asked her what she was going to do in India. She said

that was the delicate matter she had wished to consult me about—that she hoped I would really be calm, and not try to shake her resolution, for that it was all settled, and I had only myself to thank: she was going out to be married. ‘Married!’ But I didn’t seem to care twopence, and asked, ‘Who to?’ She said that she wasn’t at liberty to divulge the name, but it began with W, and perhaps I might guess when she told me that he was a person of the highest official position in the civil service, who had got into trouble about indigo three years ago. But I couldn’t guess; and she said he had been home on furlough about that time, and having seen her on the stage, had fallen desperately in love with her, and had pined ever since in voluntary exile on one of the Himalayas, much to the regret of the Governor-General and Council, who had vainly attempted to get him to come down. At last he had written to her in desperation,

and asked her to go out to him, saying, 'Restore me to my country and to myself!'

"What was she to do? She had no friends. I would not go to her. The attempt to rescue her papa from the mine might be abortive. She was dissatisfied with this life, which was a precarious one. Kean had thrown over her tragedy. She was misunderstood and disappointed on every hand; and she had resolved to cast in her lot in the far-shining East with one who had sworn to love and cherish her for ever.

"She looked very hard at me as she finished, and said, 'Don't try to dissuade me, dear Adolphus! bear the pang—it is for *my* good.' And I said, 'I won't dissuade you; I congratulate you with all my heart.' Then she gave a scream and fainted, and had hysterics—two or three, in fact—and the Count came back and put his head in and said, 'You'll have every blessed bobby

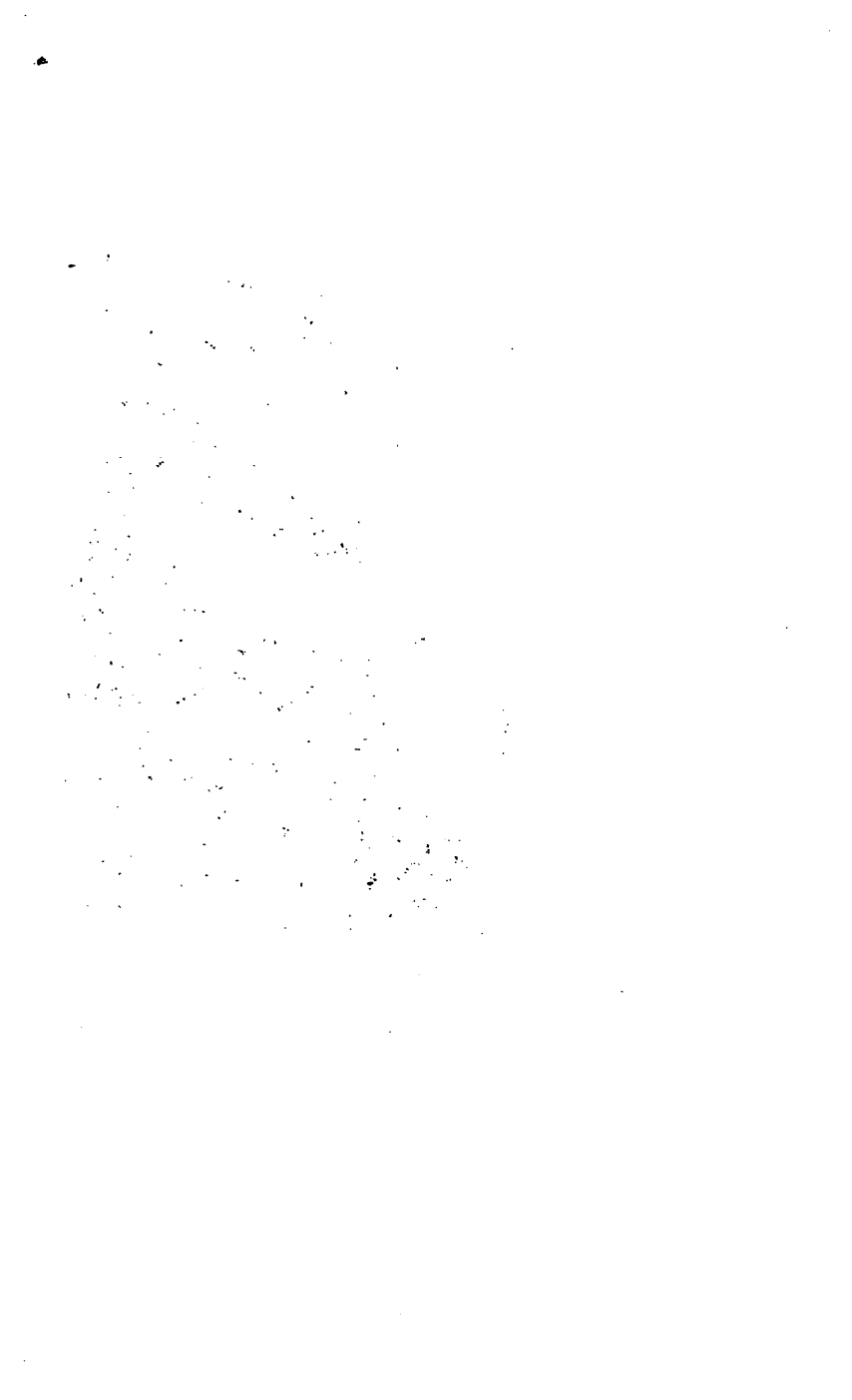
in town about the house if you don't shut up that blarmed squalling.' Then she came to at once, and said, 'Adolphus! leave me! I have been deceived in you — cruel, cruel man!' And I said, 'What the deuce had I done?' and she stamped her foot and screamed out, 'Go, viper!' So I went; and the Count met me at the door and asked me to lend him five shillings, which I did, he remarking that she (Carlotta) seemed to be 'a little spotty about the back,' which I then believed to be a Polish idiom literally translated. Next day I got down to Gravesend, and got all my traps on board. There were only about five-and-twenty passengers, but no Carlotta among them. The time was just up, when a boat came off full of luggage, and there was Carlotta dressed like an archduchess and looking really stunning. She had a maid with her, who was as drunk as a fiddler, and had to be hoisted up with ropes and things. The Count was with her

too, looking awfully seedy, all in black, with a frockcoat and a black stock, and no linen visible—which is rather a way Polish counts have, isn't it? So they bustled about, and got her things stowed away, and her maid under hatches; and then the skipper holloed out, 'All shore-boats off!' I heard the Count say to her, 'Bye, bye; wish you luck—mind the rhino,' which I thought deuced odd and familiar; and he scuttled down into his boat, and Carlotta put her head over, and said in a loud voice, 'You'll telegraph the first intelligence from Siberia.' I only heard the Count's answer indistinctly, there was such a row of steam and things, but it sounded like 'Walker!' and then, 'the flimsies regular, or I'll split—I will, by gum!' She explained to me after, that they (the refugees and plotters) had a cipher and a cant language, which they always used in discussing political secrets, so I concluded the Count must have been alluding to some

of the arrangements for getting her papa out of the mine.

“ The first night she only gave me a haughty bow, and wouldn't speak a word, and then for a week I didn't see her—she was ill in her cabin, like every one else almost ; but the first time she came on deck she walked up to me and held out her hand and said, ‘ Forgive and forget, Adolphus : I was hasty and impetuous, and did not do justice to the disinterested way you concealed your agony : you were brusque—it was painful to me, but I should have respected the generous mask with which you covered your disappointment.’ She was always harping away about my agony and disappointment, when, in fact, I was as jolly as a sandboy ; but it didn't matter to me, and seemed to please her, so what was the odds ? In a very few days we were on the old Malta footing again. She never let me out of her sight. All the

other women were as ugly as sin, so all the men paid *her* no end of attention. She was a showy woman, mind you, and fellows are hard up for something to do at sea when they are not sleeping or eating. At first she rather took up with one or two of them. There was a tea-planter, and an Indian officer, and a doctor she carried on with for a bit; and then, hang it! I got on my mettle, and resolved to show these fellows they hadn't a chance. So I went in for her again in the old way, and made all the others wild, and I liked that. I got her to turn the doctor out of his seat at meals, which was next to mine, and give it up to her, and she sat beside me all the rest of the voyage. Then I used to carry up my arm-chair to the deck for her when it was fine, and wouldn't let her use any other person's; and if there was a little sea on, I used to give her my arm up and down the deck. How the other women used to scowl and





sneer and whisper! but I liked that too. Then she quarrelled with all the women, and quarrelled with the men, and made me quarrel with them, and had a row with the captain about her light at night, and set me at him. He was a good fellow the skipper, but I had a jolly row with him. While we were jawing about the light, he said, 'Who the deuce is this empress who is to have special indulgences on board the Fleece?' and I said, 'D—n the Fleece!' and that she was a very different lot from what the Fleece carried in general; and he said, 'He hoped so.' And I said, 'Why?' and he said he thought she was 'a queer one.' Then I told him to explain himself, and he said, 'Do you see any green in my eye, youngster?' and I said, 'D—n his eye, and not to call me youngster.' Then we had a tremendous turn-up; he swore he would report me to the adjutant-general, and I swore I'd have him up before the Board

of Trade ; then he roared out laughing and went away forward. But it was hot water for me after that, all the voyage ; it was not pleasant, I can tell you. The only comfort I had was, that all the men were as jealous as tigers of me. As the voyage began to draw to an end she got awfully low and moping, and cried very much ; and I asked her what the row was. Then she told me she had terrible misgivings about the marriage ; that she feared she had mistaken her feelings, and that her strength would fail her ; that she sometimes felt it would be an injustice to the 'person in the highest official position in the civil service' to give him her hand when her heart could never be his. One night in the dusk we were sitting on deck together, and she was saying all this ; and that, as for her own feelings, of course happiness was banished from her heart for ever, and that probably it would be better if its desolate beatings

were stilled for evermore, and she laid at rest in an Orient grave, over which no one would drop a tear; and she cried awfully, and popped her head down on my shoulder. I was confoundedly cut up, and said, 'Don't cry, Carlotta; it's sure to be all right. You'll find the person in the highest official position will turn out a trump, and no mistake.'

"But she moaned and sobbed, and kept saying, 'No, no, no; lay me in an Orient grave!' At last I got cut up with a vengeance, and—and I kissed her—I did—I wanted to soothe her, I was so sorry for her, so I kissed her, and said, 'Don't cry, my darling, I can't bear it.' The moment I did this she jumped up with a scream, and cried, 'I'm ruined! I'm undone! Look there! look there!' I looked, but I could see nothing but the captain's parrot taking his evening stroll on the quarter-deck. 'What was it?' I said. 'Oh!' said she, sitting down and

panting, with both hands on her heart—‘oh ! it’s all over now ; my character’s gone : *that* Mrs Gligsby was looking out of the cabin door and saw us. Oh Adolphus, you’ve destroyed me ! you wicked, wicked man !’ I swore I hadn’t seen Mrs Gligsby, and went into the cabin to look after her, and there she was on the off side of the table, with her back to the wall, calmly playing whist with the captain and two others—so it couldn’t have been her. But Carlotta wouldn’t be comforted, and insisted that Mrs Gligsby had been there, and had harked back to the whist all as a blind, for that she was cunning and deceitful and vindictive, and I would see what I would see.

“ At last we got to the ‘Sandheads’ and took our pilot on board, and our letters came down ; and Carlotta made a tremendous shindy when there were none for her, and had hysterics all the way up the Hoogly : it was awful the way she went on.

“Well, we berthed opposite the Fort. No end of people came on board to receive their friends; and such a bustle and such a row!—nigger servants coming to look for masters, and hotel touts and custom-house officers, and all that sort of business. I went to my cabin to finish up my packing and be out of the scrimmage; and, after a bit, went up on deck to see about Carlotta’s affairs, whom I had lost sight of in the bustle. By Jove, sir! there she was—sitting huddled up beside the wheel—pale as death, her eyes quite fixed, and with such a look of horror and despair, it seemed to freeze me. I went up to her and said, ‘Good God! what’s the matter?’ and she said, quite calmly, but in a dreadful voice, ‘Go away, and let me die!’ and then I found that the person in the highest official position, &c., hadn’t put in an appearance, and, by degrees, that she had no money—not a stiver; and she and her maid each

had a long tic with the steward. Well, what could I do? Of course I paid her bill and drove her to Spence's Hotel, and established her there with her woman, and told her not to be unhappy, for that I had lots of tin, and would be delighted to be her banker till the person in the highest, &c., turned up; and then I drove off to the Great Eastern myself.

“The next day I went over to see about her. Her maid came down and said, ‘What was to be done?’ her mistress had had some bad news that morning, and was nearly out of her mind—‘What was she to do?’ ‘I didn’t know,’ I said, ‘unless I could see her mistress—could I see her?’ The maid didn’t think she was calm enough then; I had better call back in an hour or so, and so I did. Carlotta was sitting in a great empty cheerless room; her eyes were red and her face white as death, and her hair all

tumbled. She looked so wretched, so desolate, who could have helped pitying her? I did from my heart, as I thought, 'Poor thing! what lines for her! to be so far away from home—a woman—by herself—without friends or money—waiting to be married to a fellow who begins by allowing her to arrive in this devil of a country without a welcome!' 'Carlotta,' I said, 'what is the matter, my poor girl?' but she didn't speak. I asked her again, but she only moaned out, 'I wish I were dead! I wish to heaven I were dead! I am disgraced, dishonoured, betrayed!' I took her hand—it felt like a bit of lead. 'Tell me what has happened,' I said. She raised her head for a moment and pointed to a note that lay on the table. It looked as if she had been crumpling and biting and crying over it—and so she had, I don't doubt. 'Am I to read it?' I asked; and she made

a sign that I was. Here it is, Donald. I've kept it, you see, in—in hopes of—I don't know what," and he read it:—

“ ‘MADAM,—I came to Calcutta to meet you yesterday, but an accident made me late in reaching the steamer, and when I did reach it you were gone. I do not regret the accident now, as it has been the means of preventing me from taking a step which I should, no doubt, have lived to regret bitterly. Making inquiries on board the ship as to your movements, I was informed by a very sensible person, who gave her name as Gligsby, that you had hurriedly left the ship with a Hussar officer — a Lieutenant Burrige; and on my expressing surprise, she said that, in her opinion, you would have left sooner if there had been any land touched at; for that of all the “discreditable conduct,” as she expressed it, your conduct with this officer

was the most discreditable she had ever witnessed. "Billings and cooings," she said, "morn, noon, and night;" and, what was worse, "frequent kissings almost in public." That, under the circumstances, I should decline to fulfil my engagement will scarcely surprise you. I regret the trouble you have been put to in coming out; but Lieutenant Burridge will, no doubt, indemnify you for that; and I can only say that, if he has one spark of honour, one ray of finer feeling, one iota of humanity left, he will make to you the only reparation which, as a man and a soldier, he can do, by marrying you himself without a moment's delay. —I am yours, &c.,

T. W.

"*P.S.*—I should add that the captain of the ship fully corroborates the painful statement of Mrs Gligsby.'

"When I read this there was a kind of

mist came over my eyes, and all sorts of things flashed through my mind as quick as lightning. Did I want to marry Carlotta? No, certainly not. I didn't care for her, and I didn't want to marry at all then. I was young and rich, and had large prospects, and I had very soon learned the value of these things in the world. A marriage like this would be a flooring thing for all my after-life. I could never shake it off—never. Then I looked at her, so desolate, so ill used, so heartbroken, and, as I believed, so fond of me, and I said to myself, 'If I forsake this poor woman in her grief, when she has lost all her prospects through me, I am the most selfish scoundrel in the world, and would deserve to be drummed out; and I'll stick to her—so help me God! I will.' All this passed in a moment. Then I knelt down beside her, and put my arm round her waist, and said, 'Don't cry, darling,' but she cried all the more; and I

said, 'Carlotta, will you let me comfort you? Will you let me take the place of this scoundrel' (meaning the person in the highest official position) 'who has betrayed you?' Then she looked up—so sad and wearied she looked—and said, 'No, Adolphus, I love you too fondly to wish you to sacrifice your life to mine. Because I am wretched, why should you be? I can't accept a husband without his love,—and yours, I know, I haven't got.' I thought this very noble and disinterested of her, and I cried out, 'But I *do* love you, Carlotta—I swear I do' (and I believed it for five minutes), 'and if you'll take me, here I am. I'll do my best to make you happy, and be a good husband to you as long as I live.'

"Then she threw her arms round my neck, and said I had raised her from the dead—that she cared for nothing else, now I said that I loved her—that she was perfectly happy, only would I mind saying it

again and again? I did so. I vowed and swore that I adored her, and I kissed her like—like—a good deal, and then we had tiffin. I went out after to make arrangements for the marriage, and then we rode in ‘the Course.’ I was in a sort of dream; I remember the band playing there—a sweet kind of air, and rather a sad one, and it seemed to say, ‘You’ve cooked your goose, Dolly, my boy, and all your jolly days are over.’ By George! the band was right.

“Three days after, we were married in the church in Fort William; you know the church, Donald? I didn’t know a soul, no more did Carlotta; and as she couldn’t ask ‘the person in the, &c.,’ to give her away, I boned the doctor whose seat she had taken on board the Fleece, and he gave her away.

“We had a little make-believe marriage *déjeuner* at the hotel after. Gad! how

miserable I was ! The doctor got screwed, and insisted on making speeches, I remember—though we were only three—proposed ‘The Queen’ and ‘The Rest of the Royal Family,’ ‘The Army and Navy,’ ‘The Church,’ &c. &c., and kept cheering away like fun, all by himself ; and brought in a punkah - wallah, and told him to return thanks for the Church, because he was ‘japanned,’ he said, like a parson ; and he kicked the beggar down-stairs because he wouldn’t do it — couldn’t, you know, of course—and dropped an ice-pail after him ; and the landlord came up, and we had a row. Oh ! it was horrible ! it’s all like a bad dream. I recollect trifling little things as if it was yesterday, and I remember thinking how unlike it all was to what a good man’s and a good woman’s marriage ought to be. But Carlotta was in high spirits, and we drove down in the evening to Barrackpore, and went to the hotel there

for the honeymoon. The honeymoon didn't last long—only three days. I had reported myself in Calcutta, of course, and in fact got leave, you know, to go away from the town for a week, leaving my address in case I was wanted. My regiment was up country, but I was to march up in charge of detachments or something, whenever there was anything to go. It was the Mutiny-time, and no fellow could travel up country like a gentleman then, I can tell you. Every one had to put his shoulder to the wheel. Well, we had been honeymooning at Barrackpore for three days—Lord, how sick I was of it!—when an orderly arrived with a thundering official for me.

“I was to march up country with a mixed draft in forty-eight hours. I didn't know what the deuce to do with Carlotta. You see I had made no preparations, because the marriage had come off so sud-

denly. But in we went to Calcutta, and put up at Spence's; and I thought I would go and consult the regimental agent, and I did. He looked gloomy at first, and said, patronisingly, he didn't see what was to be done; leaving a lady at an hotel was an expensive business for a subaltern, and there were no lodgings in Calcutta. I said, 'Lodgings, be hanged! I must take a house for her, of course.' He laughed and said, 'Who's to pay the piper?' and I flared up and said, 'Who *should* pay the piper for a man's wife but a man himself?' And he fumbled his keys and things in his pocket, and said, coolly, 'You have private means, perhaps; but rent here is enormous: it would take more than your whole pay, for it isn't even full batta down here.' I said, 'Yes, of course I have private means; I have four thousand a-year, and as much more as ever I like from my grandmother.' Then his manner changed at once—I'll be

hanged if I ever met a fellow of that sort, Donald, whose manner didn't change when he found I was coiny. Coin can do a lot of things, but it can't make me happy now, confound it! Well, he became as civil as possible, and I gave him a letter from my bankers at home; and then he wanted me to tiffin, and come and live with him—and have a brandy-and-soda then and there, and a weed, all among his ledgers and things. He was very useful, and took any amount of trouble, and found a very nice house before next forenoon, in Garden Reach, all furnished and ready (in fact, I believe he turned out of it himself—the rent was so enormous); and you know you can get servants (of a sort) by whistling there; so that night Carlotta and I took up house in our new abode. I gave her an unlimited credit (like a fool) with the agent, and next day said 'Good-bye.' She cried, of course, tremendously. I can't say I did; for as

soon as we were married her manner and style seemed to change, and I saw she was a horribly coarse, low-bred, vulgar woman, and that she had been acting the lady, just as if she were on the stage, all the time before. She could act like fun, she was amazingly clever. So I went away up country with my draft, and I thought as I left Calcutta, 'I don't care if I never come down country again.' "

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

